PIEGELMAN & SACCO: ON THOSE CARTOONS

The Nation.

THE PALESTINIAN PATIENT
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THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM:

PROTEST OR CELEBRATION?

by MICHAEL BLANDING

A NEW VISION OF IMMIGRATION

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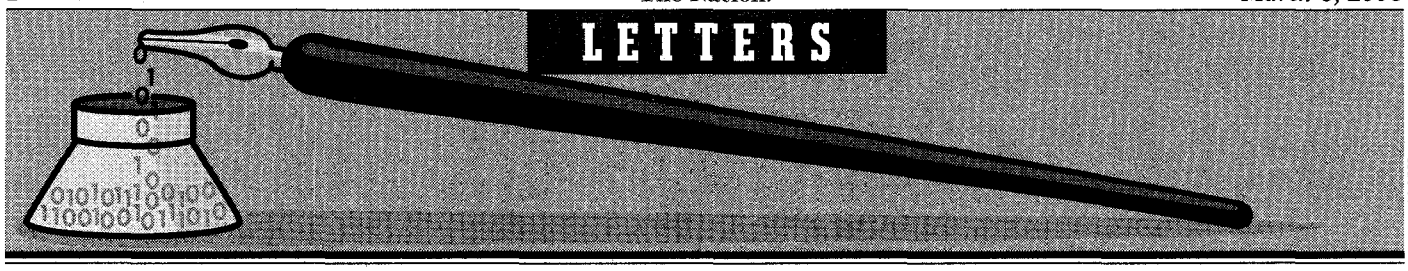

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

PLAN D—D FOR DISGUSTED

Douglaston, NY

■ I note another dimension of the new Medicare "benefit" that Trudy Lieberman has analyzed so well in "Part D From Outer Space" [Jan. 30]. My wife and I belong to a large HMO/Preferred Provider Medicare plan, which includes prescription drug coverage. We were required to join Part D of Medicare and were automatically enrolled by the HMO. Our co-payments have increased sharply, and drug co-pays of $10 before December 31 are now $200–$300. Curious how hefty subsidies on one end precipitate large price rises on the other. JACK EBLEN

Oakhurst, NJ

■ A critical point not mentioned in Trudy Lieberman's piece on Part D explains why so many seniors are not signing up for it. Take as an example the AARP plan as offered before Part D. It is underwritten by United Health Care, a major insurer, which also covers (Medigap) doctor and hospital services not covered by Medicare, as well as prescription drugs. The monthly cost has risen every year and there's no reason to believe it won't continue to go up. True, it has a deductible, and Part D does not.

But seniors are wary of the new plan because although the Medigap portion will initially be roughly $70 a month less on average, the annual increases will soon wipe out that difference, to say nothing of hikes in drug prices. Last year my monthly AARP fee for Medigap and prescription drugs combined was $228. It was raised this year to $250. The other concern is that although the new plan has no deductible the co-pays are a free-for-all by both pharma and, yes, the druggists! Seniors thought the co-pays would be $5 per prescription. In my case, five are $28 and one is $56 monthly—on top of the $24 monthly premium. Will that rise every year?

Why will the cost of the plan go up every year? Private insurers cannot manage their overhead, which runs around 12 to 14 percent annually. Amazingly, Medicare is an efficiently run program with no more than 4 percent of its operating costs derived from overhead. As *The Nation* has argued before, Americans need a single-payer system to provide low-cost healthcare for a lifetime. BUD POMERANZ

Centennial, Colo.

■ As an RN who works with Medicare beneficiaries, I find that Part D is a clear and present danger. Trudy Lieberman's article was dead on, but I would take it a step farther. You don't have to wear a tinfoil hat to see that Part D could serve a sinister purpose: to turn people off the idea of a national health plan. I hope the whole thing will backfire. VIRGINIA GILLISPIE

Farmington Hills, Mich.

■ Trudy Lieberman left out the most glaring flaw in the Part D bill. Signing up is not mandatory, so only those on Medicaid or seniors on drugs will sign up. You could not create a worse scenario for financial disaster, because the program will not have a pool of nonusers of drugs helping to finance the program. Newt Gingrich was instrumental in creating the flawed outlines of Medicare Part D and has helped fulfill his theory that government programs fail. Part D should be rescinded and replaced with a mandatory program free of the K Street lobbying and bribes that characterized the original bill. GREGORY N. AUSTIN

LIEBERMAN REPLIES

New York City

■ Gregory Austin is correct. Signing up is not mandatory. And if enough people don't sign up, the risk pool is likely to contain only sick people who need drugs. That ultimately means that the cost of the program will go through the roof, because there won't be enough healthy people contributing premiums. Time will tell whether the penalties for not signing up will be sufficient to coax people to join the program. TRUDY LIEBERMAN

'CAPITALIZATION' IN BOLIVIA

Bethesda, Md.

■ Daphne Eviatar's "Evo's Challenge in Bolivia" [Jan. 23] provides many thoughtful reflections on the presidential election there but contains an implied, and unjustified, criticism of the reforms of the past twenty years. (I served as representative of the Inter-American Development Bank in Bolivia between 1994 and '99, but these opinions are entirely my own.)

The measures adopted in the mid-1980s served to reduce significantly and ultimately eliminate hyperinflation, whose principal victims were the poor. Inflation levels that virtually no other country in the world has suffered—more than 20,000 percent per year—created a chaos that made impossible the investment so necessary to provide Bolivia with an economic base to begin to fight that poverty. In fact, greater economic stability by the early 1990s provided a basis for another round of reforms that Eviatar mistakenly characterizes as "privatization." Those were in fact measures of "capitalization," a novel formula by which 50 percent of the shares of the companies are passed to the Bolivian people and benefits from that investment are in turn provided in the form of annual payments to senior citizens, most of whom are very poor. A perfect solution it may not be, but—among other benefits—in less than two years it encouraged long-delayed exploration, which determined that Bolivia sat on the second-largest proven gas reserves in South America. Sufficient to quickly turn around the condition of the indigenous poor it may not be either. But capitalization certainly maintains a presence in Bolivia in the development of its natural resources and promotes growth and some equity, and deserves to be recognized as such. Also, over the past twenty years, particularly the past ten, public investment in Bolivia, supported by more socially oriented policies of the government and resources from international financial institutions, has increased measurably in the health and education sectors. As a result, the socioeconomic conditions of Bolivians, while far from acceptable for the majority, have nonetheless begun to show improvement. Despite Eviatar's suggestions to the contrary, I expect the support of the international financial community for economic and social reform in Bolivia to continue. DAVID B. ATKINSON

Madison, Wisc.

■ Daphne Eviatar paints the worst-case scenario for Bolivia. She predicts that Evo Morales will not risk alienating the international financial institutions that have their chains around the necks of Bolivia and other Latin American states, and his failure to deliver will result in civil war. But there is another path I think is more likely because we are already seeing it. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez will use his oil largesse to pay down Bolivia's debt, and China will become the new investor in Latin America.

Chávez has already bought Argentine bonds to finance the payoff of its IMF debt, and he bought some of Ecuador's bonds as well. He will likely continue to do the same for other Latin American countries as part of his vision of liberating them from foreign pressures and engineering an integrated Latin American economy that does not have to submit to the neoliberal privatizations and restructurings that have crippled them. I see no reason to think that oil prices will fall anytime soon. So another scenario is... US dollars flow to China to buy goods. China invests those dollars in Latin America, taking the place of US and US-associated multinational corporations, which will be shut out as a result of years of IMF- and World Bank–forced privatizations and restructurings, which have fueled hatred of the US government. The oil wealth of Venezuela, the natural gas wealth of Bolivia and trade with China will provide the money to pay off Latin America's Western debts. China

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EDITORIALS

Less Butter, More Guns

The budget is an annual statement of national priorities and in even-numbered years also serves as a campaign platform for the party in power. This President's new spending priorities are grotesque—a cruel distortion of what matters to Americans—and riddled with deceptions. For the campaign, however, Bush's slogan is surprisingly frank: "Cut the butter, give us more guns." Terror is his theme, as usual. But instead of pretending, as he has in the past, that the war will be painless on the home front, Bush now asks people to choose between their fears and their hopes. That's a far riskier gamble, and one he just might lose.

Bush's budget is littered with phony claims and fanciful projections, but it does clearly frame a potentially decisive debate: Do Americans acquiesce to the "long war" envisioned by Pentagon planners? Or will Congress at last choke on the folly and open-ended costs of this new cold war? Bush is determined to convert America into a permanent war economy. If we reject his priorities we can perhaps turn back a national disaster before it's too late.

While Bush slashes or freezes domestic programs like healthcare and education, his Pentagon budget increases by 7 percent, to $439 billion, 45 percent greater than when he took office five years ago. And the $439 billion is only part of the increased largesse for the military-security complex; another $33 billion goes to the ill-managed homeland security agencies. That still doesn't count the war itself—another $70 billion or more.

Meanwhile, belt-tightening applies only at home—141 domestic programs either killed or cut. Education loses $2.1 billion, from student loans to vocational training. Healthcare takes a substantial hit, which means hospitals and nursing homes lose Medicare financing or communities lose disease prevention. Agriculture gets less for conservation. Federal home-heating aid ignores rising oil prices. The number of hungry Americans, rising at about 10 percent a year, is now 38 million, but Bush takes a whack at food assistance too.

These cuts are cynically proffered to allow the Administration to claim it tried to be fiscally prudent, since it knows Congress will not impose such severe pain—Bush proposes, for example, to eliminate the $225 death benefit widows and orphans receive under Social Security. At the same time, the budget counts new revenue from regressive tax "reforms" Bush hasn't had the nerve to propose. It cuts Medicare while proposing new tax-free medical savings accounts that in effect benefit only the affluent—much like the rejected "reform" of Social Security. (The budget actually pretends that Social Security reform remains a live proposal.)

The question citizens—joined by courageous politicians—should examine is this: Why does the Pentagon need so much money, now that the Iraq War is supposedly winding down? The answer is that more such encounters are ahead, as part of the "irregular warfare" against terrorism involving super-sophisticated techniques that Field Marshal Rumsfeld says will be unfolding "for a generation to follow." But why, then, is so much money proposed for weapons originally designed for the last cold war? The Quadrennial Defense Review explains they're needed as a "hedge" against a future challenger—read China—to US dominance. China, meanwhile, is where US multinationals enthusiastically locate their new production and high-tech research laboratories. This would be merely absurd if it weren't so dangerous.

The prime threat to our national security is a run-amok militarism that invites conflicts around the world and risks further national shame. Citizens have a chance this season to force a real debate on that threat, as well as to demand a budget that puts people's hopes before their fears.

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Cherry-picked Intelligence

Nearly 2,300 American GIs and tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians have died in a war in Iraq that has wounded many more, cost US taxpayers hundreds of billions, tarnished the image of the United States throughout the world and strengthened the hand of violent anti-American jihadists. George W. Bush repeatedly denies having misled the nation while blaming others or trying to redefine the primary motivation for the invasion. But with such results, he cannot escape scrutiny of how he prepped the country by declaring over and over that an Iraq loaded with WMDs and in cahoots with Al Qaeda posed an urgent and direct threat.

Now Paul Pillar, National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia from 2000 to 2005, reminds us, in a *Foreign Affairs* article, that in the run-up to the war "intelligence was misused publicly [by the Bush White House] to justify decisions already made"—that is, Administration officials selectively cited intelligence to bolster the case for war. Worse, Pillar says, the "intelligence on Iraqi weapons programs did not drive [the] decision to go to war." Bush and his aides did not study the intelligence to determine if a pressing danger existed; they decided to invade for reasons of their own and viewed intelligence only as material from which they could pluck spin-worthy nuggets to sell the war. They showed little interest in the full analysis assembled by the intelligence agencies (which contained significant ambiguities and generally concluded that Iraq was not an immediate threat), and they created a "poisonous atmosphere" in which intelligence analysts were disinclined to challenge the consensus position and "policymaker self-deception" flourished. "The Iraq case," Pillar writes, "needs further examination." That's why the Senate Intelligence Committee should finish up the Phase II investigation, which is supposed to examine how the Administration handled the prewar intelligence. But the report isn't necessary to reach the obvious verdict: Bush & Co. had no use for reality-based policymaking. In that circle, intelligence was no match for assumption.

COMMENT

Bush's New Storm

Nearly half a year after federally built levees crumpled around New Orleans, the Bush Administration is facing a new storm of its own making. In recent weeks it has proved itself as incapable of managing the Congressional inquiries into its post-Katrina actions as it was of managing the hurricane response itself. But there's one difference: In this new storm, at least, one gets the impression that Team Bush is doing its very best.

Here's one way you can tell they're trying: Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman is on message. If you want to discern the White House's talking points, it always pays to check out Coleman, and the Katrina hearings are no exception. On February 10 Coleman dutifully sprayed verbal buckshot at both Louisiana

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COMMENT

Only Pictures?

What do American cartoon artists make of the worldwide protests ignited by the Muhammad cartoons published by the Danish paper Jyllands-Posten*? The Nation's Sam Graham-Felsen posed a few questions by phone to two whose work we hold in great esteem: Joe Sacco, a Maltese-American, the author of* Palestine *and* War's End*, and Art Spiegelman, Pulitzer Prize–winning author of* Maus *and* In the Shadow of No Towers.

What was your initial reaction to the controversy?

Sacco: My initial reaction was, "What a bunch of idiots those Danes were for printing those things." Did they not think that there was going to be some sort of backlash? Cartoons like that are simply meant as a provocation.

To me the bigger context is that there are segments of the Muslim population around the world that have been pummeled with other images, like Abu Ghraib, that are also offensive. And you also have to see this in the context of how some Muslims around the world are viewing the actions of the US or allies of the US, for example Israel. You add all these things into the mix, and it's just another thing, another part of this ridiculous war that is being forced on people, that is supposed to be about a "clash of civilizations."

Spiegelman: I have spent a lot of time soul searching and still come out on the same side of the equation. If there's a right to make cartoons, there has to be a right to insult, and if there's no right to make cartoons, well, I'm in big trouble. And I think America might be too.

Now that the images are out there, do the media have a responsibility to reprint them, or is it enough to describe them?

Sacco: Well frankly, I'd say it's enough to just describe them. Putting the cartoon itself out—what's the value of it? An editor, working in the real world, has to balance a number of things. There is a value in showing people what the fuss is all about, but the impact might be violent, and an editor does have to think about those things. I think most American editors have handled it pretty well.

Spiegelman: This notion that the images can just be described leaves me firmly on the side of showing images. The banal quality of the cartoons that gave insult is hard to believe until they are seen. We live in a culture where images rule, and it's as big a divide as the secular/religious divide—the picture/word divide.

The public has been infantilized by the press. It's escalated to the point where it's moot whether one should reprint these pictures or not because now to do it puts you firmly on the side of the libeler, the defamer. And yet, it seems to me that to write about this without access to the pictures is an absurdity. The answer to speech, in my religion, is more speech, a lot of yakking—and a lot of drawing. And if a picture is worth a thousand words, very often it requires 2,000 words more to talk about the picture, but you can't replace that thousand words with another thousand words.

If *The Nation* and the *New York Times* had simply said, "We're scared shitless," I could take that. I'm not only a cartoonist—I'm a physical coward.

What is it about images, as opposed to words, that seems to spark so much offense?

Sacco: It's a very pointed medium. In a split second you get it like a sledgehammer. That is the power of an editorial cartoon. I do not work in editorial cartoons; I do comic books. But in editorial cartoons, the idea is that one picture is going to give you the whole story—or not the whole story, actually, but reduce it down to some sort of essence, leaving aside context. It just gets to the heart of it, gets to a punch line. And I think there is an inherent power in the immediacy of an image.

Spiegelman: Cartoons have a kind of acidic potency for clarifying a situation because they're reductive. It also seems to me that cartoons are defamatory by nature. One can mitigate the defamation by trying to indicate subtleties, you know, and often that ends up making it very difficult to make a cartoon at all. If anything, I think the cartoons have gotten too damn polite in America over the last decades. The cartoons have to be gag cartoons instead of emblematizations and essentializations of situations, which is what they used to be. When one manages to do that, it usually gets someone upset.

Will this controversy cause cartoonists and graphic artists to self-censor their work more frequently?

Sacco: No. I think maybe the idiot cartoonist should feel a need to be a little more self-censoring, when it comes down to it, but a thinking cartoonist weighs what he or she is doing. Frankly, I don't give a damn about these Danish cartoons. In the end, yes, there is a principle about the freedom of expression that concerns me, but I'm always sorry to have to rush to the defense of idiots.

Should this controversy really be framed as an issue of freedom of speech?

Sacco: All societies have their taboos. Are these editorial cartoonists going to rush to the defense of anti-Semitic cartoons? I doubt it, frankly. There are countries in the so-called West—Germany, Austria—where depiction of Nazi imagery is against the law, and even doing a Hitler salute—you could be imprisoned for something like that. It's a hot time on this planet, and tempers are going to flare, and people are going to get hurt with these sorts of things. Freedom of the press, or the idea that you can depict anything—we simply don't subscribe to that when it comes down to it. I mean, child porn is not allowed. There are certain barriers or borders we all sort of agree, or most of us agree, where you are taking things too far. I personally don't necessarily think that attacking a religion is taking it too far, or even working within the imagery of religion to attack it. But you have to judge each instance, and what it means.

Spiegelman: There has to be a right to insult. You can't always have polite discourse. Where I've had to do my soul-searching is articulating how I feel about the anti-Semitic cartoons that keep coming out of government-supported newspapers in Syria and beyond. And, basically, I *am* insulted. But so what? These visual insults are the symptom of the problem rather than the cause.

In 1897 politicians in New York State tried to make it a major offense to publish unflattering caricatures of politicians. They were part of a Tweed-like machine who didn't like insulting drawings published of themselves, so they spent months trying to get a bill passed and to make it punishable by a $1,000 fine and up to a year in prison.

What happened?

Spiegelman: It got killed. We have this thing called the First Amendment that was in better shape, maybe, then than now.

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COMMENT

Governor Kathleen Blanco and New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, before narrowing in on the day's star witness: former Federal Emergency Management Agency head Michael Brown. And so two political hacks—one elected, one appointed—turned on each other. Coleman entreated Brown to "put a mirror in front of your face" and "confess your own sins." But Brown, perhaps realizing that his designated role as fall guy won't give him much of a boost in his new private-sector career—disaster consulting—refused to play along.

Brown has no defense. He had advanced his appearance before the committee by telling the *New York Times* that the "real story" is the faulty structure of FEMA, a once-sturdy agency that collapsed when George W. Bush folded it into Homeland Security in 2003. The Administration capped its restructuring by naming inexperienced pals to top positions, with Brown as Exhibit A (Brown skipped this point in his testimony). At the time, Brown crowed that his agency was "FEMA on steroids," as first reported by Jon Elliston in a 2004 investigation. Now, in front of the committee, Brown blamed the "disconnect" between FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security for the agency's inability to function when faced with an actual emergency.

But Coleman refused to give up. "You didn't provide the leadership," he assailed. "Even with structural infirmities, strong leadership can overcome that. And clearly that wasn't the case here." Coleman got that one right, albeit unintentionally. The destruction of New Orleans and the still-climbing official death toll, which now stands at more than 1,300, is the direct consequence of weak leadership from the top—the White House. The flawed federal levee system and the botched response resulted in this country's most deadly man-made disaster. The waters have long since receded, but, despite occasional vague murmurs of affection from Bush, New Orleans is still struggling to function as a modern American city. Nobody's confessing anything here. The travesty deserves an independent investigation and full participation from the White House. Instead, it received Republican-led inquiries and no direct access to the President.

Yet even the compromised investigation is unearthing startling facts about how this country responds to an urban catastrophe. In testimony and in details emerging from hundreds of thousands of documents, the scenes are of an Administration and its agencies that, when disaster strikes, stumble over one another in ways that would be high slapstick, if only it were a movie. E-mails, phone calls and even eyewitness accounts alerted the White House as early as Monday, August 29, that people were stranded and waters were rising—but it didn't deter Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff from flying to Atlanta to hash over the threat of avian flu, or Bush from flying to the side of country singer Mark Willis to get his picture taken while hashing out some guitar vamps. Words like "disconnected" and "disengaged" dominate the Congressional findings. This disconnect preceded the storm, when the nation's response plan wasn't followed. It occurred during the storm and in its aftermath, when New Orleans citizens clutched starving babies and screamed at CNN cameras. And it continues to this day.

For New Orleanians, Bush delivered a clear sign that he remains disengaged when he nixed—without offering a viable alternative—the Baker bill, an ambitious plan to purchase and restore ruined homes, and then faulted Louisiana for not coming up with a plan. Then there was the State of the Union address, devoid of even a moment of silence for the men, women and children who died on the streets and in their attics. The only mention of what happened in New Orleans came in four sentences toward the speech's end—in a segment about compassion. It's not about compassion. It's about justice. Americans must realize that we are all responsible for rebuilding New Orleans and funding Category 5 hurricane protection, including coastal restoration. This will require a national effort, led by the President. But so far, this President doesn't appear to be up to the job. "One thing that I have found is a strong correlation between effective leadership and effective response," said Republican Senate homeland security committee chair Susan Collins with candor. "Unfortunately, I have also found the converse to

CALVIN TRILLIN

On the Report by House Republicans (Yes, Republicans) That Excoriates the Bush Administration for Its Fumbling Response to Hurricane Katrina

Though Bushmen had claimed that word never reached
The White House that levees had finally been breached,
The White House was told, all the evidence shows.
Yes, this report shows that it's doubtless that those
In charge of tornadoes and floods and nor'easters
Had all been informed and then sat on their keisters.
And Chertoff was sluggish and clueless and worse.
It's in the report, all in chapter and verse:
His failure to get what the crisis demanded,
Like buses and boats, meant that thousands were stranded.
While Bush, at the ranch, kept on cutting out brush,
His gaggle of clowns seemed to be in no rush.
So Brownie is hardly unique in this mob.
No, others as well did a heckuva job.
It's easy to blame one incompetent slob,
But others as well did a heckuva job.

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COMMENT

be true." House investigators were even more direct, stating that "earlier presidential involvement might have resulted in a more effective response."

Details are still emerging from the inquiries. But we already know enough to know that we need an independent investigation; that Chertoff, the President's top adviser on national disasters, should immediately be relieved of his duties; and that Bush and Dick Cheney should be compelled to testify. As New Orleans labors to rebuild its hospitals, its courts, its neighborhoods, its cultural life, its schools, its streets, its businesses, its homes, its public transportation, its police force, its environment and everything else that makes a city a city, it deserves restitution. A half-year after the storm, not one New Orleanian should be without a home because of a President who failed to protect a city and hesitated to save its citizens. MICHAEL TISSERAND

Michael Tisserand, the former editor of Gambit Weekly *in New Orleans, is currently working on the book* Sugarcane Academy, *forthcoming from Harcourt.*

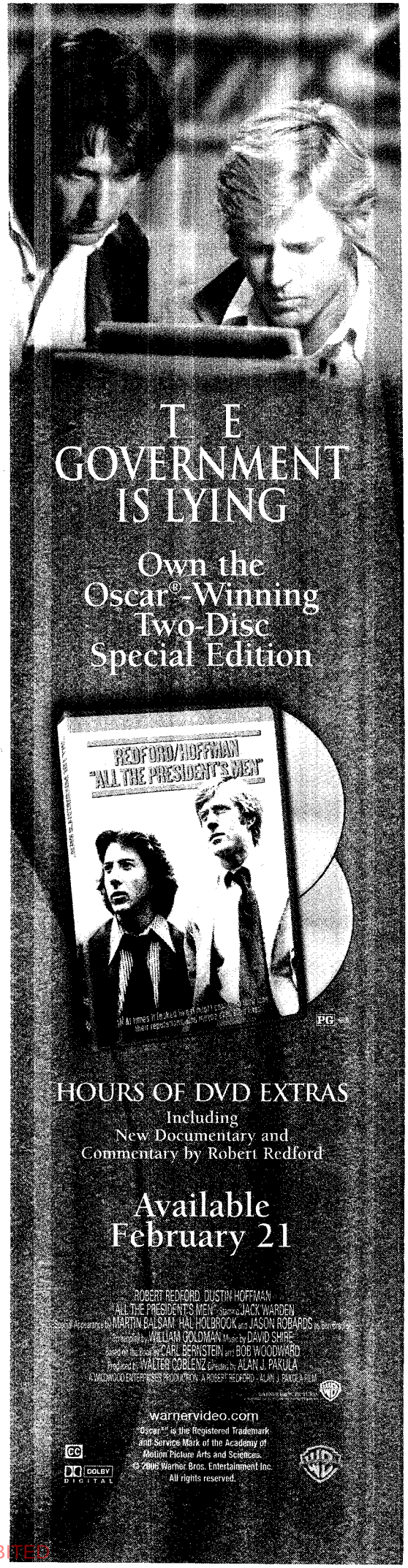
The FISA File

With a debate now raging over George W. Bush's secret authorization of warrantless wiretaps by the National Security Agency in defiance of the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, we must take another look at why Congress passed the act in the first place. The legislative history clearly shows that the intention was to deny the President the unchecked right to determine whether a proposed target met a legitimate "foreign intelligence" need. Instead, Congress ordained that all proposals to intercept such communications with foreigners must first be reviewed and approved by a special FISA court.

Prodding Congress into action in 1978 were recent revelations of abuses by the NSA. One was Operation Shamrock, instituted in 1947 to intercept telegraph messages; another was Operation Minaret, created in 1967 to intercept the electronic communications of militant civil rights and anti–Vietnam War activists. NSA officials knew these programs were illegal and accordingly devised procedures to preclude discovery of their actions. Also important were revelations that President Nixon had co-opted the NSA and the FBI to advance his own political and policy agendas.

Nixon's abuses started after Congress passed the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. This law included a section allowing wiretapping that had been banned by the 1934 Communications Act and authorizing its use if a warrant had been obtained. But it also stated that the warrant requirement would not "limit the constitutional power of the President to take such measures as he deems necessary to protect the Nation against actual or potential attack or other hostile acts of a foreign power, to obtain foreign intelligence information deemed essential to the security of the United States, or to protect national security information against foreign intelligence activities." During the debate on this proposal, Senator Philip Hart asked Senators John McClellan and Spessard Holland, the floor leaders on the bill, whether this provision gave "the President a blank check to tap or bug without judicial supervision, when he finds, on his own motion, that an activity poses a 'clear and present danger to the Government of the United States.'" McClellan and Holland denied that it would. They contended that the language was neutral and did not "affirmatively" grant any such powers to the President but merely stated that the President's (undefined) constitutional powers were not restricted.

As it turned out, Nixon was the first President to exploit this loophole. The occasion was a 1969 article in the *New York Times* by William Beecher revealing that the United States was bombing Cambodia. This disclosure squarely contradicted the claims the Administration had been making to the press and Congress. Angered, Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger ordered the FBI to investigate the source of the leak. In response, the bureau wiretapped Beecher and three other Washington-based reporters, plus thirteen Nixon Administration officials, including National Secu-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COMMENT

rity Council (NSC) aides Morton Halperin and Anthony Lake. The objective of this request was to promote the President's potentially controversial policies by stopping leaks of negative or contrary information to the press. The wiretaps, subsequently, promoted the President's partisan interests as well: Halperin and Lake continued to be tapped after they left the NSC to join the presidential campaign staff of Senator Edmund Muskie, the 1972 Democratic frontrunner.

The NSC wiretaps preceded another Nixonian initiative, this time to use the intelligence community to develop information linking the President's radical critics with international communism. Dissatisfied with the FBI's failure to quarry the desired information, Nixon in June 1970 directed a special interagency task force to review the capabilities of the intelligence community and recommend changes. The resulting report, forwarded to the President by Tom Charles Huston, White House representative on the task force, urged Nixon to authorize a series of "clearly illegal" activities, including wiretaps, bugs, break-ins, mail openings and interceptions of international communications. Nixon agreed, but to assure himself "deniability," he had Huston sign the order authorizing these tactics. (The abuses were first revealed in the Watergate hearings and probed more fully by the Church committee.)

Nixon was not the only President to deploy the intelligence agencies on behalf of his own agendas. Starting with Franklin Roosevelt, Presidents have made the FBI an intelligence arm of the White House. Lyndon Johnson frequently demanded "name check" requests—a search of FBI files for all derogatory information on an individual—on reporters who had written pieces critical of his policies. The revelation of this practice by the

(Continued on Page 30)

In Fact . . .

THE NSA NONHEARINGS

■ Bruce Shapiro writes: Washington has never seen a non-investigation quite like the Senate Judiciary Committee's hearing into the NSA surveillance scandal: On the one hand, Attorney General Gonzales's cheerful defiance of any probing question; on the other hand, the Republican committee leadership falling over one another to avoid calling Gonzales to account. Senator Arlen Specter, once a proudly independent civil libertarian (and who has made dissenting noises over the NSA program), gave the Attorney General a free pass by refusing Senator Russ Feingold's request to take his testimony under oath. Then Specter punted Congressional responsibility for the whole matter by proposing that the secret FISA court rule on the entire program, radically expanding its purview from individual warrants to national security policy. It was not the toothless Judiciary Committee but Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee who finally managed to alarm the White House enough to get a full committee briefing on the surveillance operation. The new White House strategy relies on letting Republicans and Democrats alike vent about being excluded from briefings, as a distraction from the core issue: the surveillance program. Democrats, with a few notable exceptions like Feingold, are slouching to the occasion, complaining about the President's abuse of authority but not challenging domestic spying itself.

WEAPONS OF MISDIRECTION

■ Shapiro also writes: Last November 13, two close friends went hunting in northern Vermont late on a Sunday afternoon. Jason Bean, 22 years old, heard a sound he thought was a deer; he fired his rifle. The bullet struck his 23-year-old buddy Chad Lumbra in the hip. In short, it was a hunting accident—similar in many respects to the accidental shooting of lawyer Harry Whittington by Vice President Cheney on February 11. Here's the difference. Unlike Harry Whittington, who suffered a minor heart attack, Chad Lumbra died of blood loss. And unlike Vice President Cheney, Jason Bean has been charged with manslaughter. Hunting accidents happen—but when they do, police investigations are often rigorous, because in certain circumstances an accidental shooting suggests reckless endangerment. Twenty-four hours of White House silence after the Vice President shot a man in the face raise real questions: Was Cheney in any way compromised in his judgment? The accident happened in late afternoon: What about his admitted lunchtime drinking? Do any of his health problems or the medications he takes affect his reflexes? Did the twelve hours before Cheney was interviewed by a local sheriff's deputy, and the nearly full day before a calculated Corpus Christi press leak, buy time to line up participants' stories? All of this would amount to speculation relevant only to the idle paranoid—except that for Cheney the political and the personal really are indistinguishable. A war in Iraq, a hunting accident in Texas; evading accountability and suppressing the news are this Vice President's signature.

MOVE OVER, BROWNIE

■ Two months after Jeremy Scahill's exposé of Stewart Simonson, George W. Bush's official in charge of preparing the nation for bioterror attacks, avian flu and other public health emergencies ("Germ Boys and Yes Men," Nov. 28, 2005), requests are mounting for the removal of the man who's on track to be the next Michael Brown. "This is a serious job at this point, and I think we need to have professionals filling it, not political appointees," Republican Tom Davis, who chairs the committee overseeing Simonson's Project Bioshield, told CBS's *60 Minutes*, which aired a lengthy report on Simonson last month. "To date he's been singularly unimpressive."

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

■ NASA climatologist James Hansen, whom Bush apparatchiks tried to muzzle, tells Bryan Farrell how we can still mitigate global warming. And Nicholas von Hoffman explores a trend among the super-rich to freeze themselves and their bank accounts in hopes of rising again (www.thenation.com).

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Fables?
How About the Truth?

The Nation, in its January 9 issue approved and published a full-page ad paid for by an organization called FLAME. (Facts and Logic About the Middle East)
The ad was headlined: "Arabian Fables"

Here are some of FLAME's Fables, and the truth:

"The concept of the 'West Bank' is a myth."

It is nonsense to say that the modern designation for any territory is a 'myth.' 'Judea' and 'Samaria' are two names for a highland region that has known hundreds of names through the millennia. If some people wish to call the West Bank by older, or newer names, they may. But this does not erase the Palestinians' presence there, their right to remain there, and their right to enjoy the privileges and protections of citizenship.

"The nationhood of the 'Palestinians' is a myth."

'Palestinians' are, by definition, the indigenous people of Palestine. Israel's own records confirm their ancient presence there. Their ancient towns and villages stand there, their society is rooted there, and their political identity was shaped there. Their nationhood emerged from their twentieth-century struggle for self-determination in their ancestral homeland. Their right to citizenship in that homeland remains inalienable. None of these facts will vanish solely because Israel finds them inconvenient.

"The concept of 'occupied territories' ... is another of the many myths created by Arab propaganda."

Military occupation is not a myth created by Arab propaganda. It is a fact created by guns. Since 1967, Israel has been holding an indigenous population of millions under belligerant occupation, as Israel's own international diplomacy admits. The boundaries of these territories were established by Israel through war.

The Nation, in the past, has rejected ads it believes are racist, patently fraudulent, and libelous. The FLAME ad clearly meets those criteria. The FLAME ad has no place, paid or free, in the pages of what purports to be a progressive magazine. We believe that The Nation should publicly apologize to the Palestinian People and to all people of conscience who have been deeply offended by their decision to publish the FLAME ad, and we recommend that the money received by The Nation from FLAME be donated to a respected Palestinian charity.

The undersigned believe we live in a country where certain expression is out of bounds for intellectual honesty and decency. We do not attack people on the basis of their race, religion, ethnicity or national origin. We believe that human rights as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights apply to all peoples including the Palestinians. It is unacceptable to deny the existence of the Palestinian people and their human rights, including their right to self-determination.
Note: The names here are arranged chronologically, as they came in, and therefore this is only a partial list.

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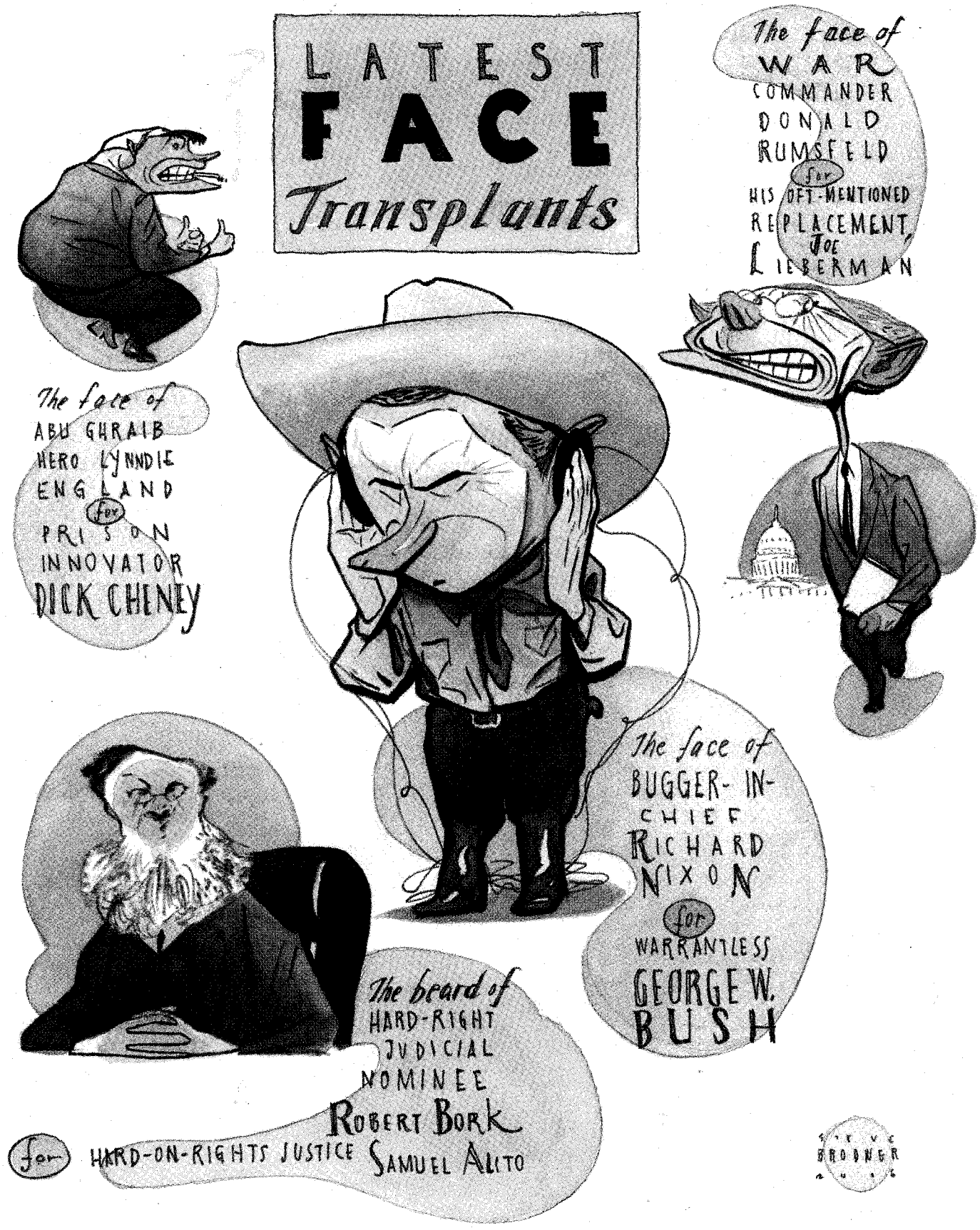

STEVE BRODNER

Steve Brodner is a satiric artist living in New York.

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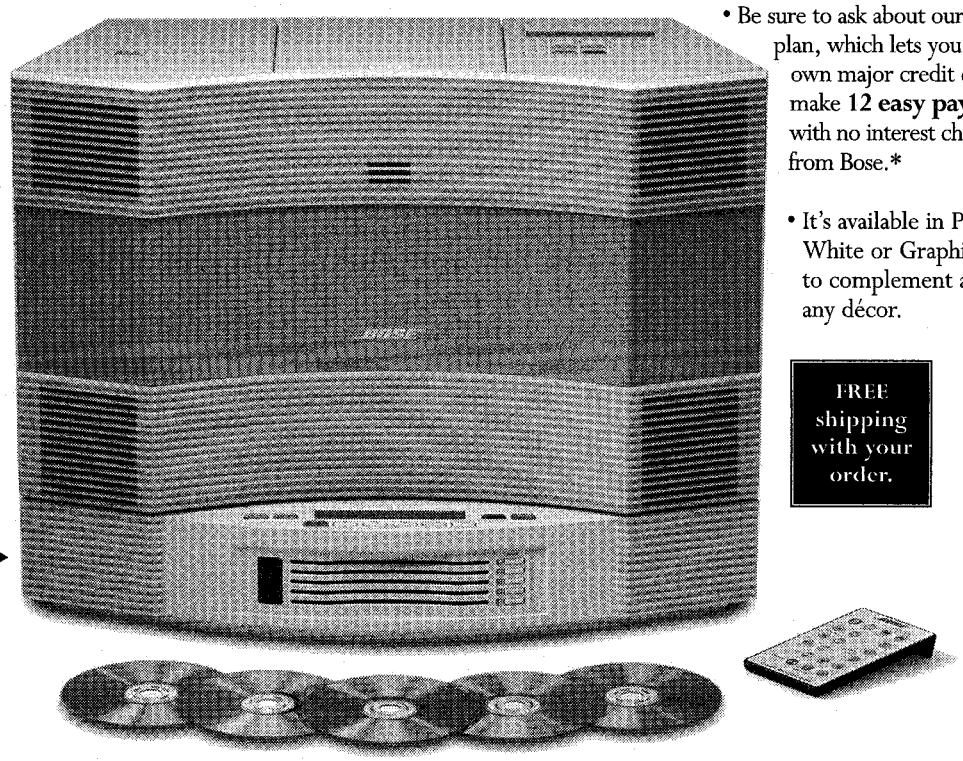

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Farewell to Ground Zero

This column will be my last "Letter From Ground Zero." The series will be succeeded by another, "Crisis of the Republic." Until recently it seemed possible to trace the main developments in the Bush Administration's policies back to that horrible, fantastical day in September 2001, as if following an unbroken chain of causes and effects. Now it no longer does. The chain is too entangled with other chains, of newer and older origin.

The war against Afghanistan, where Osama bin Laden had his headquarters and support from the ruling Taliban, was, for better or worse, a clear response to the attack on the United States. The Patriot Act and the reorganization of the national security apparatus likewise were responses to September 11. But with the launch of the Iraq War, the subject was already beginning to change. The political support for the war still flowed from 9/11, but the Administration was already veering toward other objectives. For one thing, we know that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and others had wanted to attack Iraq since their first days in office, and, for that matter, even before. For another, the war proved to be a kind of test case of a far more sweeping revolution in American foreign policy, soon outlined in the White House document of 2002, the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, which set forth American ambitions for nothing less than global hegemony based on military superiority, absolute and perpetual, over all other nations. Many friends of this policy frankly and rightly called it imperial.

The Iraq test case has failed; in doing so it has tied down forces that otherwise might have been given further aggressive missions. The imperial plan stalled, as the nuclearization of North Korea without an effective American response, among other things, attests. Nevertheless, the Administration's international ambitions had a scarcely less sweeping domestic corollary, for which no master strategic document was supplied: a profound transformation of the American state, in which, in the name of the "war on terror," the President rises above the law and the Republican Party permanently dominates all three branches of government. That project had even less to do with 9/11 than did the Iraq War. Its roots can be traced at least as far back as the election of 2000, when the Supreme Court improperly interjected itself into the electoral dispute in Florida and a majority consisting of Republican-appointed Justices awarded the presidency to the man of their own party. Or perhaps we need to look back even further, to the attempt by the Republican-dominated Congress to knock a Democratic President out of office by impeaching him for personal misbehavior accompanied by a minor legal infraction. (If those standards were still in force, President Bush would have been impeached eleven times over by now.) Obviously, these events had nothing to do with 9/11 or the Iraq War. Their roots are older and deeper. To arrange all the new developments, domestic and international, under the heading "Letter From Ground Zero," as if it all began with Osama bin Laden, would therefore be misleading. It would be a kind of lie.

For the series' new title, I want to acknowledge a debt to Hannah Arendt, who in 1972 published a book of essays titled *Crises of the Republic*. My single-letter change in her title reflects a belief that today the many disparate crises of the past have combined into one general systemic crisis, placing the basic structure of the Republic at mortal risk. At the forefront of concern must be the question: Will the Constitution of the United States survive? Is the American state now in the midst of a transmutation in which the 217-year-old provisions for a balance of powers and popular freedoms are being overridden and canceled? Or will defenders of the Constitution step forward, as has happened in constitutional crises of the past, to save the system and restore its integrity?

The obvious precedent is Watergate. Then as now, the presidency became "imperial." Then as now, a misconceived and misbegotten war led to presidential law-breaking at home. Then as now, a quixotic crusade for freedom abroad really menaced freedom at home. Then as now, the law-breaking President was re-elected to a second term. Then as now, the systemic rot went so deep that only a drastic cure could be effectual. Then as now, opposition at the outset consisted not of any great public outrage but the lonely courage of a few bureaucrats, legislators and reporters. Then it was the war in Vietnam; now it is the war in Iraq and the wider and more lasting "war on terror." Then it was secret break-ins and illegal wiretapping; now it is arbitrary imprisonment, torture and, again, illegal wiretapping. Then it was presidential assertion of "executive privilege"; now it is a full-scale reinterpretation of the Constitution to give the "unitary executive" power to do anything it likes in "wartime."

Of course, there are obvious differences. In the early 1970s, the opposition party controlled both houses of the legislature, which launched vigorous investigations and, eventually, impeachment proceedings. Now of course the President's party controls the legislative branch and possibly (it's still too early to say, given the traditional independence of the judiciary and its consequent unpredictability) the judicial branch as well. Then, the movement against the war had forced a decision to withdraw; now the antiwar movement is much weaker. On the other hand, when the crisis began back then, the President's popularity was high; now it is low.

Yet what remains most striking and most surprising is the degree of continuity of the systemic disorder in the face of radical, galloping change in almost every other area of political life. After all, the cold war, which seemed at the time to be the seedbed of the Watergate crisis, ended sixteen years ago, in the greatest upheaval of the international system since the end of World War II. How is it, then, that the United States has returned to a systemic crisis so profoundly similar to the one in the early 1970s? By looking at external foes, are we looking in the wrong place for the origins of the illness? Is this transformation what a more "conservative" public now wants? Or is there instead something in the dominant institutions of American life that push the country in this direction? Those are some of the questions that will be taken up in "Crisis of the Republic."

Jonathan Schell is The Nation Institute's Harold Willens Peace Fellow.

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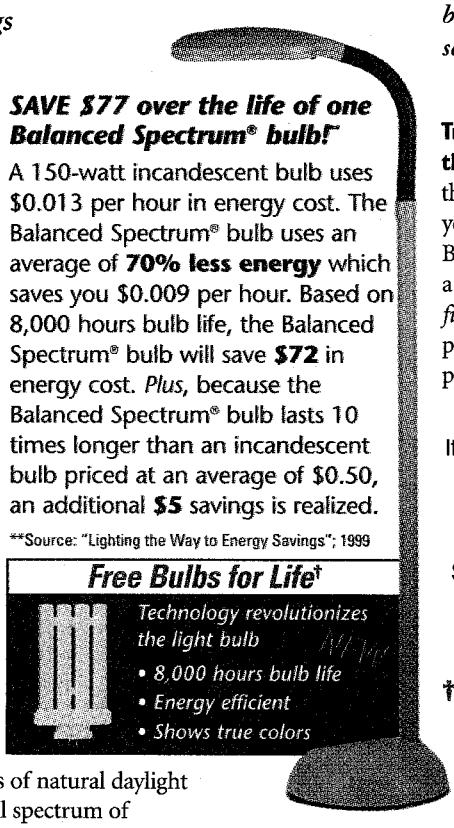

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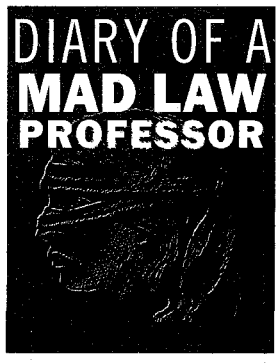
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Emotional Truth



In the past week there has been an interesting convergence of inquiries into the nature of truth. James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* triggered deep epistemological soul-searching about whether simple lies can constitute "emotional truth." After a swirl of media confusion, a sound tongue-lashing from Oprah Winfrey seemed to seal up the answer as a resounding Not On My Dime.

At the same time that Frey's soap opera was playing itself out, researchers in France were searching for any charred relics at the site where Joan of Arc was said to have been burned at the stake. They want to subject any putative remains to DNA testing. Why one would want to do this has become something of an issue in the European media: She didn't have children, the site of her martyrdom is in dispute, the legitimacy of any so-called relic would be highly contested. But the pursuit of knowledge in so attenuated a context has raised questions about the hunger for certainty in the face of such uncertainty. What are the limits of historical insight? How many graves shall we dig up to settle old scores? What are the possibilities of knowing absolutely?

Here at home, the American press has been busy dissecting Henry Louis Gates's exploration of his roots and those of a handful of other prominent African-American figures, including comedians Chris Tucker and Whoopi Goldberg, scholar Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot and, of course, Oprah Winfrey. It is a fascinating series of TV programs, particularly from the perspective of the discipline of history. It reveals the peculiar difficulties of tracking lines of descent through slavery, the sales of human beings that acknowledged no family ties, the absence of last names, the absence of first names in some cases and the necessity of consulting not just census records but also "the master's" property holdings for listings of possible relatives. The reconstruction of family history is like an archeological dig, part intergenerational storytelling, part study of migratory patterns, part recovery of commercial transactions and part science.

The science du jour is, of course, DNA testing, and Professor Gates could not be more incautious about its salutary promise for African-Americans in search of a sense of self. Here is where the programs run into some rather careless uses of that science. On the one hand, DNA testing can be quite useful in establishing certain kinds of family relation. Gates's own test results showed that he has an Ashkenazi foremother, and that he has no relation to Samuel Brady, the white patriarch he'd grown up "knowing" as the man who impregnated his great-great-grandmother. His family lore had never hinted at what the *Wall Street Journal* dubbed his "Yiddishe Mama." By the same token, nothing had prepared him for Brady's *not* being his direct ancestor. Indeed, one of Gates's cousins remains adamant that the test must be wrong. If the test is right, he insists, there are two truths. One is the story he grew up with, the other is what the DNA says.

Somewhere in between what the DNA says and what shaped the family account is a gap that is something like a lie. A secret passing from black to white? An act of assimilation or aspiration? A myth to hide some shame, some rape? A change of identity to escape to freedom? Yet I do hesitate to think of it as precisely on the same moral level as the kind of "lie" that James Frey is said to have told in his book. There is something very human about the repetition of family stories until they become epic rather than literal, the burying of family secrets, the lying of ancestors, the reinventions of migrants, the accommodations of raw ambition, the insulations from terrible shame. This is, I suppose, distantly related to James Frey's addled manipulations; it might also be related to, but of a different order than, the magical thinking of mental patients or character-disordered people or victims of great trauma. There is something so commonplace about the kinds of family mysteries that Gates's inquiries reveal—particularly in the American context. It is part of how many, many of our ancestors, regardless of where they came from, reinvented themselves in the New World. NYU law school Professor Jessie Allen describes the "magic" of legal remediation as follows: "What ought to have been prevails over the past." Family stories ritualize the past in a very similar way. It is part of what Professor Robert Pollack, head of Columbia University's Center for the Study of Science and Religion, calls the "eschatology of repair."

If there is value to this kind of "emotional truth"—if I can be permitted that term—it is important not to confuse it with the sort of truth that DNA tells us. So while DNA can undoubtedly pinpoint certain aspects of our ancestry, it does not make literal sense to say, as Gates does to Oprah Winfrey: "You've got education in your genes." Of course, he was speaking metaphorically at that moment, using the human genome as a metaphor for a pattern of socialization, a family habit, a thirst for knowledge modeled by parents. But at other points in the program that metaphoric dimension is applied rather more carelessly—and more dangerously. "I'm 50 percent white," says Gates. But there is no more an allele for "whiteness" than there is for "education." "White" is a malleable social designation with a freighted history. Were his Ashkenazi ancestors to appear before us today, they might be called white, but as Eastern or Southern Europeans coming to America a hundred years ago, they probably would not have been considered so.

It behooves us to be less romantic about what all this DNA swabbing reveals. I worry about the craving to "go back to Africa," to "connect with our Yiddishness" or to feel like new doors have been opened if we have an Asian ancestor. The craving, the connection, the newness of those doors is in our heads, not in our mitochondria. Rather, it is the process of superimposing the identities with which we were raised upon the culturally embedded, socially constructed imaginings about "the Other" we could be. The fabulous nature of what is imagined can be liberating, invigorating—but it is fable. If we read that story into the eternity of our blood lines, if we biologize our history, we will forever be less than we could be. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

The Gasbag Gap

Mainstream reporters tend to see both liberal and right-wing critics as a bunch of whiners who "just don't get it." And in many cases, they're right. But being mainstream reporters, they tend to believe—nay, *know*—that they are always right. In fact, journalism is just about the only field whose practitioners routinely justify themselves on the basis of the fact that they receive criticism from "both sides." The possibility that they might be screwing up in two (or more) ways simultaneously appears to be beyond their imaginative capabilities.

During the past generation, these same mainstream journalists have lurched to the right, thanks in large measure to an extremely well-funded, well-organized and well-disciplined conservative political assault comprising, essentially, two tactics: a willingness (and ability) to make life miserable for those who don't go along, and a determination to shape the zeitgeist in such a way that those who do go along may not even know they're doing so. In other words, what Tony Soprano cannot accomplish, leave to Antonio Gramsci.

While most fair-minded observers ought to agree with the above, particularly in light of the rise of the far-right media empire of Rupert, Rush, O'Reilly and talk-radio, etc., it's still pretty difficult to prove. Most academic studies of media content are compromised because even with the best intentions, it's impossible to control for independent political variables. As for the decades-old studies purporting to show that reporters vote Democratic: When not biased in the first place, they tell us nothing about the content of the news. A number of Rupert Murdoch's top lieutenants claim to be liberal Democrats—a lot *that* matters! And remember, this study doesn't include Fox!

All this is reason to welcome the new study by David Brock's Media Matters for America, titled *If It's Sunday, It's Conservative.* MMA conducted a content analysis of ABC's *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*, CBS's *Face the Nation* and NBC's *Meet the Press*, classifying each one of the nearly 7,000 guests from Bill Clinton's second term, George W. Bush's first term and 2005 as either Democrat, Republican, conservative, progressive or neutral. Its key finding: "The balance between Democrats/progressives and Republicans/conservatives was roughly equal during Clinton's second term, with a slight edge toward Republicans/conservatives: 52 percent of the ideologically identifiable guests were from the right, and 48 percent were from the left. But in Bush's first term, Republicans/conservatives held a dramatic advantage, outnumbering Democrats/progressives by 58 percent to 42 percent. In 2005 the figures were an identical 58 percent to 42 percent."

In addition, "more panels tilted right (a greater number of Republicans/conservatives than Democrats/progressives) than tilted left" for *every single year of the study*. In some years the gap was as high as four to one. Moreover, Congressional opponents of the Iraq War were all but banished from the Sunday shows, particularly in the period just before it was launched.

When spokespeople for the shows were contacted to explain the disparity, they claimed that they go where the action is, and today the action is Republican/conservative. (Though it should be noted that *Face the Nation* was considerably fairer than *Meet the Press* or *This Week*.) But of course, were that true, then the Clinton years would have been just as tilted in favor of Democrats/progressives as the Bush years have been toward Republicans/conservatives. But of course they're not even close.

Think about it: These shows feel empowered to engage an agenda-setting discussion with a panel of mostly right-wing politicians, followed by a journalists' panel in which conservatives are paired almost exclusively with down-the-middle reporters, rather than a writer or thinker who might credibly represent the liberal side. Every week, a politically neutered George Stephanopoulos seeks the wisdom of the deeply right-wing George Will, and the "neutral" (though personally conservative) Fareed Zakaria, with no balance whatsoever. (Sam Donaldson, a liberal, was previously an exception to this rule, though no liberal I know would have picked him to represent our side.) The guest list for the far more influential *Meet the Press* tells a similar story. Why, asks the MMA study's author, Paul Waldman, "would the producers of the shows believe that a William Safire (56 appearances since 1997) or Bob Novak (37 appearances) is somehow "balanced" by a Gwen Ifill (27) or Dan Balz (22)?"

What's more, despite its having been produced by a liberal think thank, the study's grading of the guests—where the rubber hits the road—is extremely generous to the right-wing side, and therefore precludes any credible complaints that it's a product of liberal bias. For instance, liberal-hater Joe Klein, together with war-supporters Peter Beinart and George Packer, are coded "progressive," and Cokie Roberts and David Broder, who openly detest both Clinton and Gore while frequently apologizing for Bush—together with former GE chairman Jack Welch and Mrs. Alan Greenspan, Andrea Mitchell—were classified as "neutral." (Remember how quick Mitchell was during the 2004 debates to accuse Kerry of "demagoguery" for daring to criticize her husband?)

Indeed, as far as critical commentary goes, with the occasional exception of E.J. Dionne, there's not a single unapologetic liberal on any of these shows, save perhaps an annual appearance as a kind of anthropological curiosity. Tune in to every show every week for a year, and you are unlikely to see Frank Rich, Paul Krugman, Rick Hertzberg, Harold Meyerson or anyone associated with *The Nation*, *The American Prospect*, *The Washington Monthly*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Salon*, *In These Times*, *Mother Jones* or even the liberal remnant inside *The New Republic*.

When you think about it, it is a tribute to the American people that they remain as receptive to liberal arguments as they do, given how infrequently they hear them. ■

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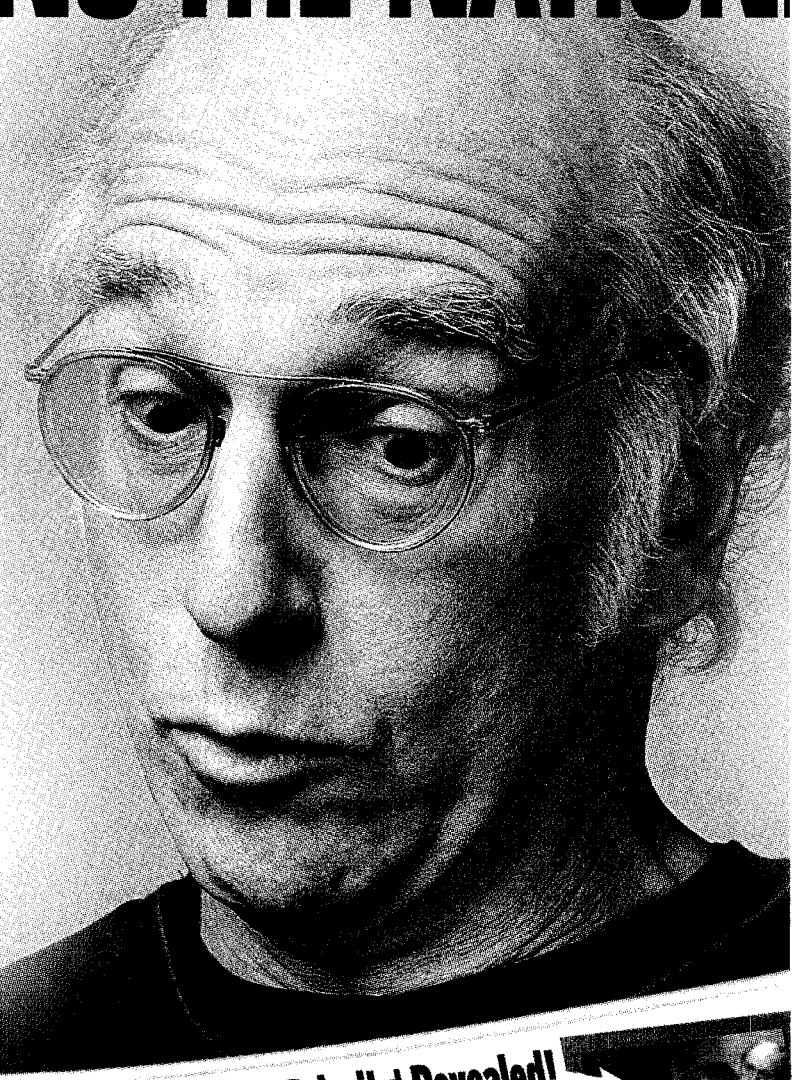

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Larry David is a longstanding Nation *reader.*

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ARTICLES

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM
PROTEST OR CELEBRATION?

MICHAEL BLANDING

Caracas

The same question echoed in the back of thousands of minds as the Sixth World Social Forum (WSF) opened here in January: "Where's Hugo?" In fact, on the day of the forum's opening march, self-styled socialist Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez was in Bolivia attending the inauguration of fellow left-wing President Evo Morales. Chávez's presence, though, was everywhere in Caracas—on T-shirts laid out by vendors on the march route (outnumbering by 2 to 1 the face of revolutionary heartthrob Che Guevara); on pins with the flag of Venezuela, handed out by volunteers; in the chants of enthusiastic supporters; even in the talking Chávez dolls sold along the street.

For six days at the end of January, more than 80,000 participants from around the globe descended on Caracas to collaborate and strategize in the annual forum for leftist civil society. This year, the Caracas forum was one of three in a new "polycentric" format intended to foster more regional collaboration. Another was held in Bamako, Mali, the previous week; a third is scheduled for Karachi, Pakistan, in March (moved from January because of last year's earthquake).

The decision to hold the forum in Venezuela gave the meeting a new flavor—as well as a new set of challenges. On the one hand, the country is living proof of the WSF's slogan: Another World Is Possible. In a short seven years, Chávez and his "Bolivarian Revolution" (a reference to legendary South American hero Simón Bolívar) have upended the Venezuelan economy, using a ready supply of oil money to fund social programs for some of the world's poorest citizens. At the same time, many forum participants expressed private dismay at El Comandante's close ties to Cuba and his cult of personality, which some critics on the left see as more show than substance.

From the beginning, this forum had a more nationalistic feel than those in the past, which have taken pains to deemphasize political parties in favor of an open space to debate. The opening march was festooned with national flags and insignia—not only from Venezuela but also from Colombia, Brazil and an 800-member Cuban delegation that marched in lockstep, wearing matching baseball caps and waving flags. Perhaps it was the overcast sky or the forbidding, postapocalyptic architecture of downtown Caracas, but the opening march of the forum also seemed less defiant than might have been expected, as if the participants weren't sure whether to protest or celebrate recent events in South America.

These are heady times for the continent. In addition to Venezuela and Bolivia, four other countries now have left-leaning leaders: Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil, Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay and the newly elected Michelle Bachelet in Chile. Last November their influence all but scuttled the Free Trade Area of the Americas (a linchpin of the neoliberal free-trade agenda, also known by its Spanish initials ALCA) at a meeting with George W. Bush in Argentina. Combine this with an open revolt against Bush's foreign policy agenda in the United States, and leftists in the hemisphere suddenly have reason for optimism.

"In the Americas, the popular movements are on the offensive, not the defensive—not only against neoliberalism but also against militarism and terror," proclaimed Jacobo Torres de León, one of the main Venezuelan organizers of the forum, at an opening plenary session. Torres de León tried to allay fears that the Venezuelan government was attempting to hijack the process. "Many *compañeros* thought this would become a Chavista forum. I can understand the reservations, but we are very interested that the forum doesn't have a political seal on it."

That may be so, but holding the forum in Venezuela breathed new life into a process some felt had turned into a debating society—and at the same time it raised questions about how movements can support a government without being co-opted. "I think to some extent people have moved on from the forum," said Chris Nineham, the

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London-based organizer of the Stop the War Coalition, during the opening march as his cohorts chanted "George Bush, *terrorista*" behind him. "It's essentially just a talking shop. But it's fantastic to be in Venezuela and hear about the movement here."

The government took full advantage of the event's presence in the city by giving tours to government-funded "missions" in the densely packed Caracas slums, where thousands of tiny concrete homes are plastered precariously on the hillsides, without running water or sewers. Forum participants were shown new housing projects, community radio stations and free medical clinics, and also residents who expressed unmitigated love for their leader. "I'm not Chavista; I look at the whole thing with a hairy eyeball," said Mary DiMatteo, an Evergreen State College student in a delegation from Global Exchange. But, she said, "when I saw that, I was like, I don't want to hear any criticism right now. He's giving people what they need—you can see it."

'How does civil society regulate regional blocs to create a radically democratic, polycentric globalization?' —organizer Thomas Ponniah

Compared with the excitement of seeing the Bolivarian experiment up close, the poor organization of the forum was an exercise in frustration. More than 2,000 sessions scattered throughout the city were sometimes hard to find and often took a long time to get to. Given the obstacles faced by participants, many sessions started an hour or even two hours late, or didn't start at all.

Meanwhile, the limitations of the World Social Forum were the same as at any conference, with too many panels dominated by men (though not white) and filled with feel-good speeches against "the empire," with too little time for questions or discussion of practical issues. Some participants gave up going to sessions halfway through the event, concentrating on the forum's grab bag of political spectacle that is part conference, part street fair and part spring break for lefties; dance parties rocked large tents with the rhythms of mambo and rumba late into the night. The real debates in the forum went on largely in private strategy sessions among members of like-minded groups, such as those planning a worldwide antiwar protest for March 18, the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq.

Other groups, like the peasant farmer coalition Via Campesina, which counts some 100 million members around the world, used the gathering as an opportunity to strategize across national borders. "This is one space where we dicuss the campaign and debate the campaign and get political support," said the organization's executive director, Rafael Alegría. "There are academics, economists and Nobel Prize winners here, and many of them have allied with us in our work."

And then, of course, there were the impromptu bull sessions over beers at the hotel bars. "So much of what's said at the forum comes down to two basic points: Neoliberalism is bad, and participatory democracy is good," said Thomas Ponniah at one of them. Ponniah is co-editor of a book of alternatives presented at the WSF and a regular organizer of events at the gathering. "What's really going on underneath is, there is organizing and strategies. In each country the forum goes to, it strengthens the civil society in the country that hosts it."

True to form, many sessions organized by Venezuelan groups were focused on promoting the ALBA trade pact, a kinder and gentler Bolivarian alternative to the neoliberal ALCA that emphasizes regional cooperation instead of foreign investment and trade. The concept began with an agreement to trade cheap oil from Venezuela for doctors from Cuba, some 13,000 of whom have set up shop in free medical clinics, to aid the country's "Inside the Barrio" program. Recently it expanded with another agreement, this one between Venezuela and Bolivia to trade oil for soybeans and other food products. Advocates envision ALBA as not just a set of individual agreements but a trade pact with, among other features, a "compensatory fund" to prop up poor countries with contributions from richer neighbors.

"Just as with the polycentric forum, countries in the Southern Hemisphere are pushing this model of polycentric globalism. That's the big paradigm shift that's coming on the left that the right hasn't clued in to," said Ponniah. "The question is, How does civil society regulate those regional blocs such that we create a radically democratic, polycentric globalization?" There's also the question of how such a bloc would be organized—leaders like Brazil's Lula and Chile's Bachelet, for example, are much more open to free trade than their northern neighbors. Even so, in many different sessions participants expressed a desire for regional collaboration, even if it's not on the Bolivarian model.

"Ten years ago it was a utopian ideal that we could have governments like those of Chávez and Morales and Lula, but today we have them," said Via Campesina's Alegría. "Now the struggle is how we maintain them and move forward."

If there is a leader who represents the power of the World Social Forum process to affect that struggle, it is the lower-profile Morales. Unlike Chávez, a former military officer who first attempted to seize power in a coup before winning election, Morales was an organizer of coca farmers who rose from the grassroots to a surprise election victory based on the support of indigenous movements and farmers. Now the social movements in Bolivia are looking for payback—pushing Morales to hold a convention to rewrite the Constitution, to carry out agrarian reform and to nationalize resources. "The victory of Evo in Bolivia is a victory for the social forum," said Bolivian peasant leader Román Loayza during a session analyzing Morales's win. "It was a movement born at the grassroots level, from the bottom up. Nobody, *nobody* thought Morales would be president. We worked organically to make it happen."

It was Chávez, however, whom many participants came here to see, and the spectacle of his entrance did not disappoint. The energy in Caracas's indoor stadium seemed more like that of a rock concert or a *fútbol* match than a political speech. The 15,000-seat stands were awash in the red shirts worn by Chávez supporters, who expressed an enthusiasm for their leader inconceivable

Michael Blanding (www.michaelblanding.com) is a freelance writer who lives in Boston.

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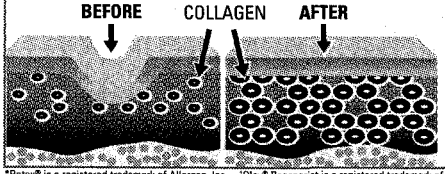

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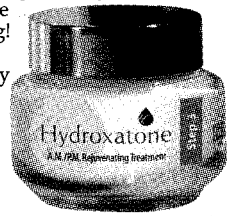

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in most countries. For an hour and a half before he appeared, musical groups amped up the crowd with booming renditions of revolutionary and folk music from Brazil, Argentina, the Andes and Venezuela, while those in the stands danced, waved flags and joined in pro-Chávez chants. (The most popular, "*Oo, Ah, Chávez No Se Va!*," or "Hey, Ho, Chávez Will Not Go!", had a way of echoing in the head for days after the event.)

Sitting on stage, many of the forum's luminaries, including Focus on the Global South's Walden Bello, ATTAC's Bernard Cassen, Che's daughter Aleida Guevara and antiwar mom Cindy Sheehan (whose presence was second in celebrity only to that of Chávez), seemed small amid the pageantry. Finally, with calls from the crowd of *Se siente, se siente, Chávez está presente!* ("Feel him! Feel him! Chávez is present!"), the man himself took the stage, wearing a bright red shirt and waving his arms ecstatically. As Chávez took his seat, air-raid sirens and machine-gun fire filled the stadium and a row of people dressed in black emerged from the wings with a black banner reading BUSH and covered with the logos of multinational corporations. After a moment, young people with fake swords emerged from the other side of the stage and ripped the banner apart, afterward raising white banners against war and neoliberalism.

'The empire is very powerful, but it is not infallible.... We will bury the US empire.'
—Hugo Chávez

As broad as the pageant was, the stadium's electric atmosphere made it strangely moving. Finally, to the self-conscious strains of "The Internationale," Chávez took the podium. "Welcome to people from all over the world who have come here to Caracas. Feel at home here!" he began. The two-hour speech that followed (short for Chávez, who has been known to speak for up to seven hours at a time) was powerful, if sometimes rambling. It included a long history of Bolívar and other Latin revolutionaries, a sung tribute to recently deceased Salvadoran leftist leader Shafik Handal and quotes from Karl Marx, Fidel Castro, Noam Chomsky, Polish Communist Rosa Luxemburg and philosophers Bertrand Russell and Thomas Hobbes.

Chávez reserved his harshest rhetoric for President Bush, whom he repeatedly referred to in English as "Mr. Danger" to appreciative titters from the crowd. (Later turning to Cindy Sheehan, he kissed her and called her "Mrs. Hope.") "The empire is the worst we've faced in history," he thundered, fists pumping downward. "This is a cynical empire. At least the Roman Empire admitted it was an empire, but Mr. Danger's empire talks about democracy and human rights." Later he made a more direct challenge to US hegemony. "The empire is very powerful, but it is not infallible. This country, we will bury the US empire. We will bury the US empire. Against this force of imperialism, we say stop."

US imperialism wasn't the only thing Chávez challenged. He also goaded the social movements to come together to endorse a proposal for action stemming from the forum. "We can't allow the World Social Forum to become a folkloric and touristic event," he said. "A forum in which debates are held without conclusions is just odd. I insist on this. Respecting the autonomy of the social movements, I believe we need to set up an alternative movement." He left no doubt about what conclusions he would like to see the forum reach, ending his speech with the invocation "Socialism or Death!"

The event sent shock waves through the forum, as participants later debated how much, if at all, it should ally itself with a government entity. That challenge was the latest salvo in an ongoing debate over whether the forum should issue joint declarations. At last year's forum in Porto Alegre a group of nineteen intellectuals, including liberation theologian François Houtart and Egyptian neo-Marxist Samir Amin, stirred the pot with a document called the "Porto Alegre Manifesto," which called for debt cancellation and reformation of the WTO, among other demands. This year at the African forum in Bamako, many of the same thinkers released a longer document called the "Bamako Appeal," with dozens of concrete proposals split over ten subject areas.

In Caracas, meanwhile, a group called the Assembly of Social Movements, a largely European-led coalition of some 300 organizations, issued a statement praising Latin American countries like Venezuela and Bolivia that "have permitted political alternatives born in the heat of popular struggles to reach government." The group continued with an action plan calling for protests against the Iraq War as well as the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg in July and the World Bank and IMF meetings in September.

Demands for action are sure to intensify as the World Social Forum matures—starting with a unified gathering in Nairobi in 2007, in which the challenge will be to connect with civil society in Africa. As Houtart put it, "If the forums don't want to become the Fifth International, they should also avoid becoming a social Woodstock. Therefore other initiatives must be taken." These joint initiatives, however, are a far cry from speaking in the name of the WSF itself or allying with specific governments, both of which are prohibited by the organization's Charter of Principles. The day after Chávez's speech, at a session on the future of the forum organized in part by Ponniah, the majority of participants spoke out against the WSF's issuing a statement in the name of the gathering. "If you look at the history of the left, these are the debates that happened in the internationals, and they explode when they try to impose that unity on everyone," observed Ponniah afterward. "It makes sense that a political leader like Chávez would make that appeal, but even though we admire him, we can't repeat the mistakes of the past century."

After all, three years ago the champion of the forum was Brazilian President Lula, who was given a hero's welcome in Porto Alegre. Since then he has been criticized by social movements for cutting deals with neoliberal institutions and falling short on social programs—to say nothing of a corruption scandal that has undermined his government. Regardless of the route the forum takes in the future, the Caracas edition seemed to make the gathering newly relevant in its dialogue with living, breathing examples of the alternative world it's always described. As the title of one event declared, the slogan for the World Social Forum may need to be changed from Another World Is Possible to Another World Is on the March! It remains to be seen where it's going. ■

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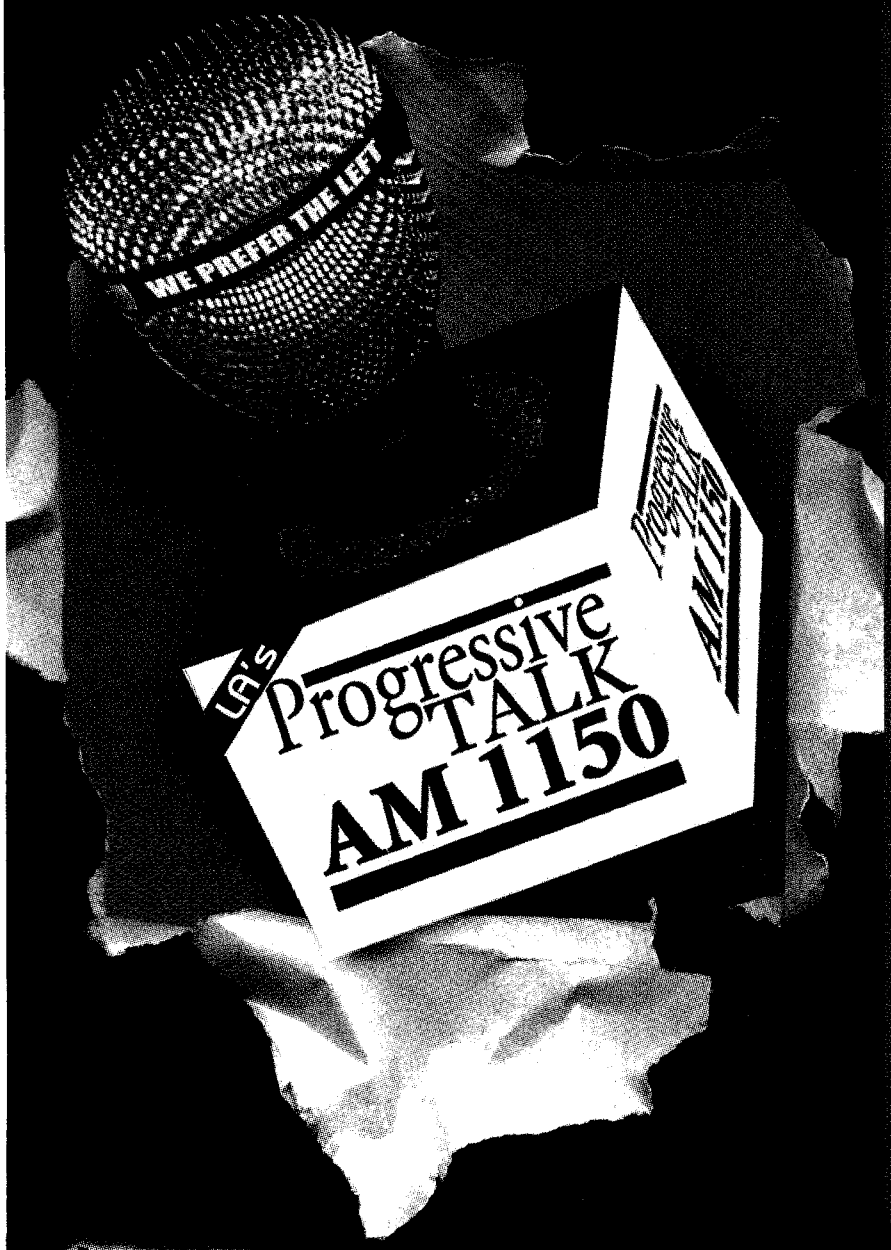

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6am-9am

Al Franken Show
9am-Noon

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Noon - 3pm

Randi Rhodes
3pm - 7pm

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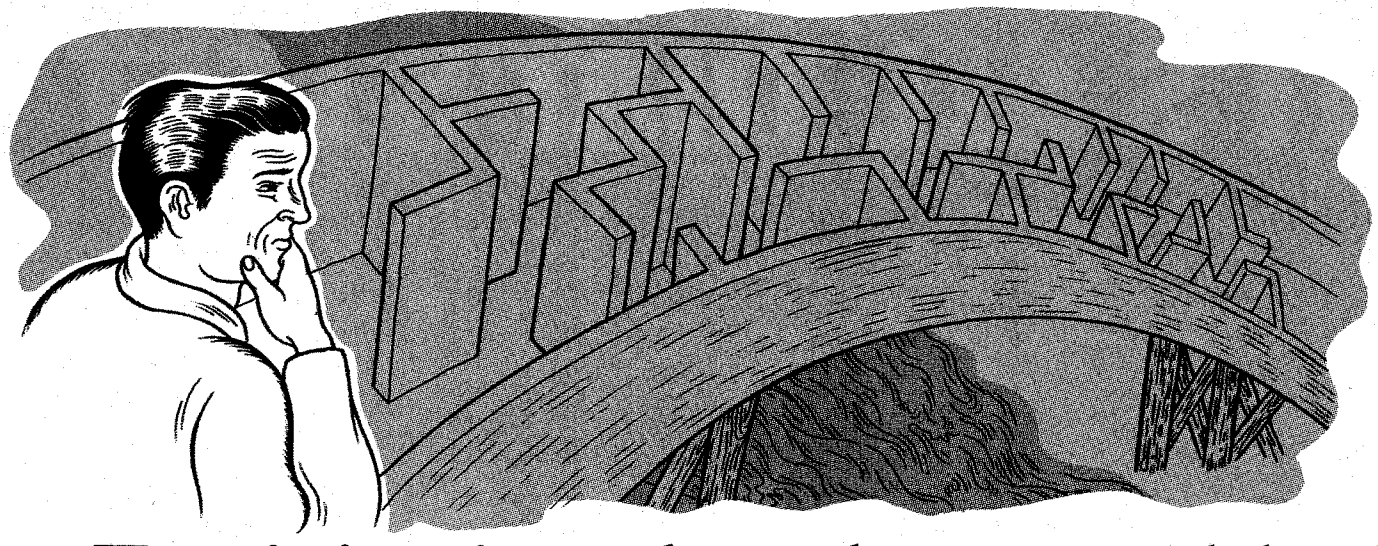
IMMIGRANT ADVOCATES OFFERED ALTERNATIVES TO A NARROW DEBATE OVER REFORM.



TIM LANE

Envisioning Another World: *Integración Desde Abajo*

BY ROBERTO LOVATO

Caracas

Under a white tent on the Francisco de Miranda Air Force Base in the La Carlota neighborhood of this Venezuelan metropolis, immigrant leaders from all over the hemisphere debated and discussed immigration policies, critiquing the obsession with national security that has warped the debate over reform and laying out their alternative visions. Filling the sultry, jet fuel–infused air on the base with Caribbean, Colombian, Brazilian Portuguese and other accents, speaker after speaker denounced the social exclusion faced by immigrants—and immigrant advocates—from Alaska to Patagonia. And more than a few railed against *El Muro de la Muerte* (the Wall of Death), which has already killed thousands—and will kill thousands more if the US Congress passes the Sensenbrenner immigration bill. The bill, which has set off alarms in immigrant communities, would make it a crime (rather than a civil violation) to be undocumented or to offer aid to the undocumented. It would also turn local police into enforcers of immigration law and extend the Wall of Death along 700 miles of the US-Mexican border.

On the sidelines, Chris Jimenez squirmed and grimaced, preparing to lash out at the Sixth World Social Forum (Foro) here in Caracas. He fidgeted as colleagues sitting beneath the giant tent housing the panel on "Migration Policy, Discrimination and Xenophobia" described how immigration policy in countries like Costa Rica, Ecuador and even liberal-left Brazil is starting to resemble the militarized and racist policy of the United States. Finally, Jimenez, an immigrants-rights activist with the American Friends Service Committee, stood up and described the two-front war he and others face behind the Muro. "We're fighting the Minutemen at the border in California. We also have to deal with racism within our movement," he declared. And then, as if pointing to some invisible figure standing next to him, he added, "None of the whites who spoke on behalf of the US delegation at the opening ceremonies of the Foro remembered to mention the more than 35 million immigrants in the United States."

Though Jimenez and other immigrant advocates spent a considerable amount of time analyzing the myopia, limits and dangers of US immigration policy, the bulk of their time at the Foro was reserved for a more transcendental matter: how to globalize the debate around and practice of immigration policy. Jimenez and more than thirty immigrant leaders descended on the Foro with a mission to link their US struggle to a resurgent, insurgent Latin American left that is electing presidents (think of the recent inauguration of indigenous leader Evo Morales in Bolivia and the election of Chile's first socialist woman President, Michelle Bachelet), defeating US-sponsored free-trade agreements and calling for *integración desde abajo* (integration from below) as the way to solve immigration and other issues in the hemisphere.

Foro participants like Jimenez explored and proposed alternatives to the punitive, security-focused approach of politicos and governments defending *integración desde arriba* (integration from above), which allows goods but not people to move freely across borders. The proposals and concrete projects shared over intense sessions, replete with food, cigarettes and music and lasting well into the evening, represented participants' best efforts to make real the theme of the Foro: Another World Is Possible. US representatives of some of the hometown associations that send more than $45 billion annually to build and sustain towns and entire

Roberto Lovato is a New York–based writer with New America Media.

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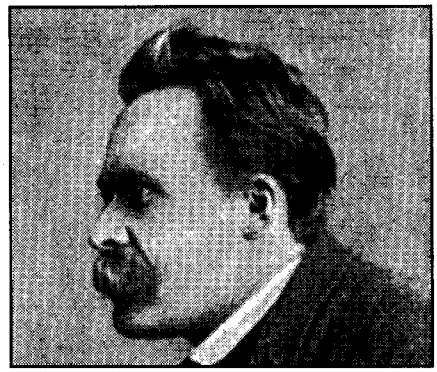

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regions regaled their southern homologues with stories of how they are doing the work that was supposed to be done by national governments and agencies like USAID, which budgeted less than $746 million in Latin American aid for the 2006 fiscal year. In turn, South American activists described how they demanded—and secured—agreements allowing for the free movement of people between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile and Bolivia as part of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) trade agreement. Together, the US Foro delegates and their Latin American peers plan to continue and expand joint binational and multinational lobbying efforts leveraging the power of US and other Latin American immigrant communities to influence governments of the Southern Cone—and the United States. Their radical vision was perhaps best embodied by proposals for a hemispheric citizenship along the lines of the European model.

But those who believe another world of immigration policy is possible are also *muy pragmáticos* about how to get there. Oscar Chacón, leader of the US Latino immigrant delegation and of Enlaces America, sees "three great obstacles" to a more enlightened US debate. The first, he says, is the "racism and xenophobia" within the mostly white-led immigrants-rights movement in the United States. Though they are the friends and allies of immigrant-led organizations, the leaders of Beltway-based religious and nonprofit immigration-reform organizations often fail to consider the ideas and proposals of immigrant leaders and their organizations. Chacón expressed dismay that those white leaders, who see themselves and are seen by many as the experts on immigration reform, "underestimate the capacity of people like me." These tendencies, he said, "can often lead to the exclusion from the debate of those most impacted by the policies." The second obstacle, he explained, is the "obsolete policy-making system" in the United States. "Just look at Congress. Immigration policy made in the House or Senate Judiciary Committee has no relationship to the Committee [on International Relations] or Western Hemisphere Subcommittee." Making things worse, he added, "is that most of the 'immigrant rights advocates' submit themselves to this silo approach to public policy." The third obstacle, according to Chacón, is the limitations on debate imposed by what he calls the "nation-state paradigm," which defines immigration as an issue to be dealt with by individual countries. "Immigration is a global issue with global causes and requires a global solution," Chacón said.

What makes the contributions of immigrant leaders unique and powerful is that their theoretical and practical frameworks are backed up by organic community and political links—and lived experience. Chacón says he came to better understand the global context of immigration after he and his family were persecuted by Salvadoran death squads in the early 1980s. He became an immigrant in the country that paid for and trained the death squads that had forced him to migrate in the first place. Like many Salvadorans, Colombians, Ecuadoreans and other Foro participants, he started making the cold war connection between the US foreign policy that forced migration and the domestic immigration policy that denied, for example, most Salvadorans and Guatemalans the political asylum granted to Cubans, Vietnamese and others fleeing governments deemed enemies of the United States. Despite the leftward tilt of governments in the hemisphere, Chacón and other Foro participants acknowledge that there's still much organizing to do in order to get to policies that will tear down the US equivalent of the Great Wall, the Berlin wall and other walls propped up by previous empires in decline. "In the Western Hemisphere the US approach of criminalizing immigrants, framing the issue as one of 'national security,' has been exported to other countries," Chacón said. "In the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico and others, you see governments adopting this punitive approach that has already proven itself a complete failure." Presentations by the South American Foro delegates stirred the memories and passions of several of the Latino immigrant leaders from the United States. US delegate Mirta Colon was riveted by the stories of Colombians pushed out of their country by the US-sponsored Plan Colombia, a policy that many here believe conflates drug cartels with guerrilla groups—and now immigrants. Colon, an AIDS activist in the Bronx originally from Honduras, was reminded of how US foreign policy sparked the migration en masse of hundreds of thousands of her compatriots in the 1980s. In the same way that US anti-communism back then made enemies out of students, nuns, campesinos and others, today US antidrug and counterinsurgency policies in Latin America are creating new classes of enemies, including immigrants swept up in the "war on terror."

The Foro is critical to developing leadership able to think and act locally and globally to combat the effects of top-down globalization.

As a working-class black immigrant woman, Colon strikes a sharp contrast with the middle-class white male citizens who debate the left and right positions in Washington and on US TV. "If we [immigrants] do not get involved in the debate, the debate will remain simple and things will get even worse," she said. "Who else understands the complexities? The voice of immigrants needs to be heard—and not just on immigration issues." She and several Foro colleagues agreed to participate in several initiatives, including a spring delegation of US immigrant leaders to Mexico and Central America. Colon and the delegation will demand that the Mexican and Central American governments take more active roles in the US immigration policy debate.

"We're just starting to tap the power of working together," said Chacón, who is also leading the spring delegation. "The moral power of our group is highly untapped." In the long term, says Chacón, participation in the Foro is critical to developing leadership that's able to think and act both locally and globally, which is needed to combat the effects of top-down globalization on Latin America's more than 222 million poor, 96 million of whom live on less than $1 a day. "It's important for those of us from Latin America to come back and recharge our batteries, exchange ideas and organize with the incredibly brilliant, inspired, committed people here. Having them [US immigrant leaders] away from their daily work, kidnapped for a week here, is invaluable for future work."

But not all the members of Chacón's delegation shared his perspective when they first arrived in the land that is, as Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, sporting his signature red *guayabera*,

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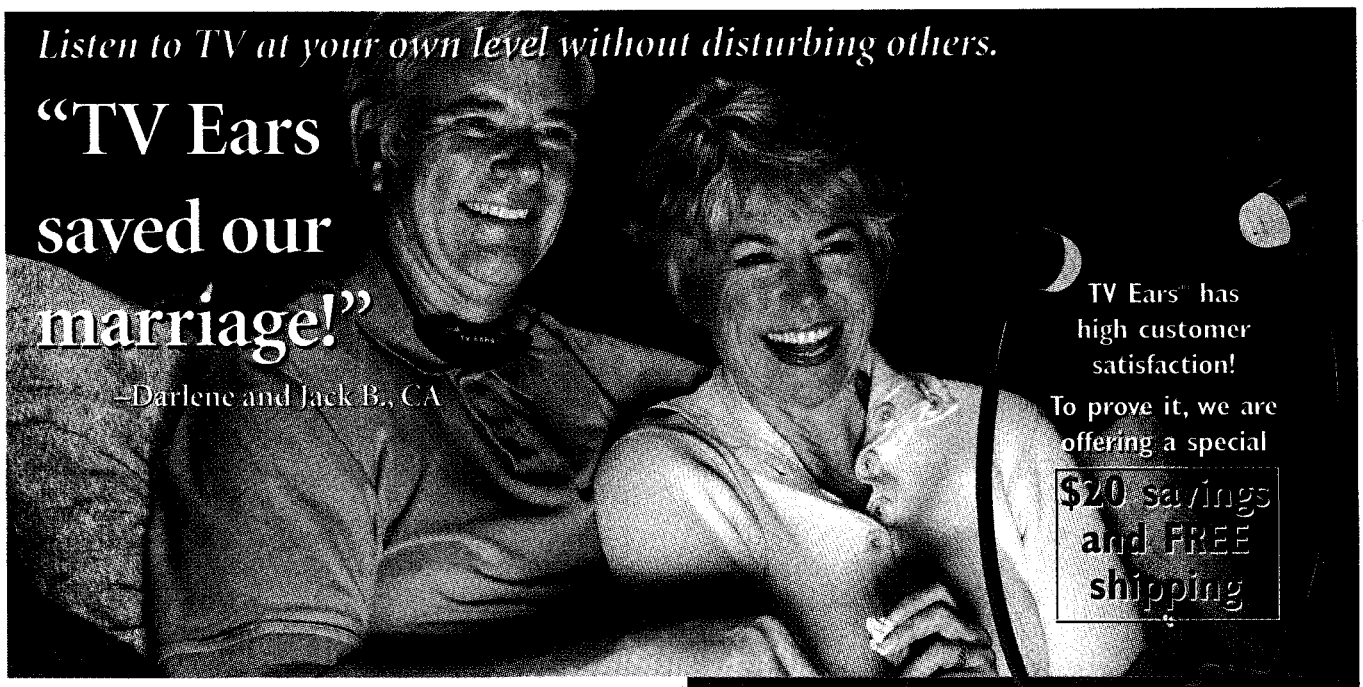

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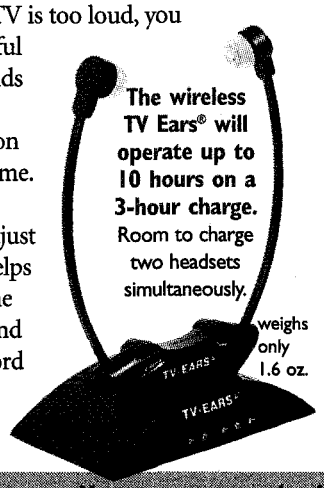

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told Foro participants, at the center of the *revolución Bolivariana* sweeping the continent.

When he first saw banners saying "Viva el Marxismo-Leninismo" at a Foro march of thousands against the US war in Iraq, Efrain Jimenez, a former undocumented mechanic recently elected vice president of the Los Angeles–based Zacatecan Federation of Southern California, wasn't so keen on the Foro idea. "It was the first march I ever went to," said the 31-year-old Jimenez, who was born in the hamlet of La Villita in Nochistlán, Zacatecas, Mexico. "I didn't really agree with some of the slogans. But then I saw other banners I could agree with, like ones that were for indigenous people and for women's rights, and I started feeling more comfortable."

After several days of exchanges with immigrants-rights activists from Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Brazil and other countries, Jimenez had an even stronger epiphany: "We're all in the same boat. We're all fighting for our rights, for a better way of life." This realization bodes ill for a Bush Administration bent on maintaining a corporate and military lid on Latin America—and on Latinos in the United States. To watch the exchange between the pragmatic and development-focused Jimenez and the more politically focused Caribbean and Central and South American activists was to witness the birth of another variant of globalization-from-below power politics in the hemisphere. "Large masses of people marching is important. But you also have to have concrete actions, *hechos*. You need to combine both." Jimenez shared with his Foro colleagues how his federation, which is part of a larger national confederation of Zacatecans, wields immense economic and political clout in Mexico and, increasingly, in the United States. "Zacatecanos in the US send millions of dollars to build roads, schools, parks, churches and other projects. Last year, we financed 340 projects and 240 scholarships for students of different ages," Jimenez said. He described how Zacatecan hometown associations in the States banded together to force the Mexican government to match their contributions in what's known as the 3 for 1 Program, in which local, state and federal governments each match dollar for dollar the money sent from the US residents.

Jimenez returned to the United States from the Foro with a new appreciation of the importance of the *frente unido* sprouting among US Latino, Latin American and, especially, immigrant dreamers of worlds without walls. On a more practical, realpolitik level, he had a renewed sense of the urgent need to combine movements around politics and economics and was impressed by the passion and *civismo* (civic participation) of Cubans he saw at the Foro. "I came back asking myself, How can we motivate Zacatecans to get out on the street and denounce and vote with the passion for politics that the Cubans have? It [the Foro] was a beautiful experience, and makes me want to continue building networks with others."

"The [US] wall, the Wall of Death, is a monument to the incapacity of governments to solve the problems of their people," says Jimenez, adding, "That's not a solution. We are part of the solution." ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

stops buying US bonds and financing our deficit. The United States becomes a bad place to invest in and Latin America the better choice. Then perhaps they all move to the euro? How will Uncle Sam respond to being shut out of his own backyard markets, over which he has asserted ownership for a century? Will we see the bloodshed of the 1980s all over again? Will China defend its new trading partners and protect its energy interests in the region?

CAROL BRACEWELL

EVIATAR REPLIES

Brooklyn, NY

■ There's no denying that Bolivia was in an economic crisis by the mid-1980s. Unfortunately, the medicine prescribed was as harmful as the disease it was meant to cure. "Shock therapy" may have stabilized the currency and vastly improved conditions for investment, but it also threw tens of thousands of Bolivians out of work and pulled the public safety net out from under them.

What David Atkinson and the Bolivian government call "capitalization" but that almost everyone else would call "privatization"—the selling off of controlling shares of state-owned companies to private ones—was a great deal for foreign investors. They were able to buy Bolivian companies and commodities at bargain prices. Even the pension funds Atkinson refers to were controlled by private multinational pension firms.

But the greatest bargains were the sales in the oil and gas industry. Enron got a major share in Bolivia's pipeline system, while a range of private oil companies got valuable licenses to explore and eventually own and control what turned out to be Bolivia's enormous supply of natural gas. The private companies paid only 18 percent royalties and no taxes. Even World Bank experts now admit that's way under the going rate in the region. The multilateral banks advising the Bolivian government didn't require transparency in the "capitalization" process, though, so all those contracts between the oil companies and the government remained secret for years. It was only after local activists started demanding disclosure that they realized what their government had given away. Now, many Bolivians insist all of those contracts are illegal, among the many reasons they took to the streets to throw out their last two presidents.

The policies adopted at the urging of multilateral banks may seem "novel" to economists, but the political upheaval in recent years suggests that they still weren't addressing the most pressing problems of ordinary Bolivians. Many are also understandably skeptical of the motives of those institutions, controlled as they are by member nations whose companies are the very same foreign investors hungry for those Bolivian bargains. Like Atkinson, I hope the international financial community will continue to support economic and social reform in Bolivia. But I hope that this time it pays more heed to the interests and desires of the Bolivian people.

As for China, there's no doubt it will invest in Bolivia and across Latin America. But there's no reason to believe it will be any less aggressive than Western corporations at trying to profit from Bolivia's natural resources. Bolivia would be wise to approach any new investment offers—whether from China, Venezuela or ExxonMobil—with caution, and to make sure it retains the right to renegotiate the terms of those investments as its political and economic future unfolds.

DAPHNE EVIATAR

HOW GREEN WAS MY LANDFILL

Houston

■ It was our pleasure to host Heather Rogers on a tour of our King George County Landfill for her article "Titans of Trash" [Dec. 19]. This Next Generation Landfill project is one of ten such research, test and development facilities run by Waste Management Inc. (WMI) and one of many others in operation or being started in the private and public sectors. All such projects are supported by the Energy De-

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Like a picked flower cut from the source, we gradually wilt physically and mentally and become vulnerable to a host of degenerative diseases, that we simply weren't susceptible to in our early adult years.

Modern medical science now regards aging as a disease that is treatable and preventable and that "aging", the disease, is actually a compilation of various diseases and pathologies, from everything, like a rise in blood glucose and pressure to diabetes, skin wrinkling and so on. All of these aging symptoms can be stopped and rolled back by maintaining Growth Hormone levels in the blood at the same levels HGH existed in the blood when we were 25 years old. There is a receptorsite in almost every cell in the human body for HGH, so its regenerative and healing effects are very comprehensive.

Growth Hormone first synthesized in 1985 under the Reagan Orphan drug act, to treat dwarfism, was quickly recognized to stop aging in its tracks and reverse it to a remarkable degree. Since then, only the lucky and the rich have had access to it at the cost of $20,000 US per year.

Many in hollywood's glamour sets, who never seem to age like you or I, have a special secret to tell, and even space pioneer and US Senator John Glen stays vital with HGH.

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GHR is a natural releaser, has no known side effects, unlike the synthetic version and has no known drug interactions. Progressive doctors admit that this is the direction medicine is seeking to go, to get the body to heal itself instead of employing drugs. GHR is truly a revolutionary paradigm shift in medicine and, like any modern leapfrog advance, many others will be left in the dust holding their limited, or useless drugs and remedies.

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partment as potentially viable sources of green energy, and all are monitored by the EPA and the states. WMI is proud to be a part of this effort to create new and improved landfills and landfill gas-collection systems.

In a consumer society like ours, we have choices about how to handle the waste we generate. We can reduce, reuse, recycle—the Three Rs—or we can dispose. How successful we are at the Three Rs depends on businesses and individuals. And for waste that must be disposed after the Three Rs, WMI is there and fully committed to safeguarding the environment.

The days of dumping waste into a pit to decompose with no one controlling the release of methane are long gone. Today's landfills are responsible for less than 2 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. The nation's greenhouse gas emissions have risen by about 13 percent since 1990, but because of technical innovations landfill emissions have dropped by 40 percent during the same time frame. WMI disposes of waste in an environmentally responsible manner and in full compliance with all regulations, including air emissions standards.

Boosting recycling rates and using captured methane from landfills to produce renewable energy are immediate opportunities to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and prevent atmospheric pollution. Currently WMI has more than 100 landfill gas-to-energy facilities in operation, supplying enough gas each year to create more than 250 megawatts of energy. That's enough to power 225,000 homes and replace 2 million barrels of oil per year. And that's just the beginning.

Facilities like King George County Landfill are part of research and development to take us to the next level. By introducing nontoxic liquids into the landfill for faster decomposition and creating new and improved gas-collection systems, we hope to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Bioreactor landfills also have the potential to extend the life of an active landfill, reducing the need for new landfills and helping the land to be reclaimed sooner after the landfill has been closed.

WMI is the largest recycler in North America. We have invested hundreds of millions in the infrastructure for the collection and processing of recyclable materials, and in doing so have helped many customers achieve 50 percent recycling rates. Through our Upstream subsidiary, we are working with industry customers to reduce the amount of waste they generate. And it is our long-term vision to change today's landfill into a source of clean energy to power our homes and fuel our vehicles.

The waste disposal industry should not be derided for investing in more efficient, effective ways to dispose of the waste we all create. Nor should Waste Management's commitment to environmental stewardship be questioned for envisioning a future in which the landfill becomes a form of resource recovery instead of merely disposal.

LYNN C. BROWN
Vice President, Corporate Communications
Waste Management Inc.

ROGERS REPLIES

Brooklyn, NY

■ In her predictably greenwashed letter, Lynn Brown is definitely on message. Saying that in a "consumer society like ours" we can choose what we do with our wastes is misleading, to put it mildly. With firms like WMI in charge of a huge proportion of the nation's waste disposal, the possibility of reducing waste, reusing materials and recycling is constricted in the extreme. Revealing a crack in her eco-veneer, Brown does not dispute that WMI makes the lion's share of its profits from landfilling and therefore has an incentive to bury as much of our discards as it can—instead of maximizing the "opportunities" of the Three Rs.

In addition, the failed logic of the landfill as a source of "green energy" is important to unpack. If we weren't throwing out so much, we'd use a lot less energy to begin with. Reducing power consumption would be far greener than sending our wastes through the capital-intensive, and hardly foolproof, process of collaring the gases from underground rubbish decomposition.

Brown's assessment of the decrease in landfill greenhouse-gas emissions is based on speculative arithmetic. Collecting airborne emissions from landfills is a crude science. There has been little independent research to verify how much gas is secured using current technology. And according to Eric Lombardi, executive director of EcoCycle, one of the nation's oldest recyclers, the EPA has not done field studies to test the capture-rate data it and firms like WMI use.

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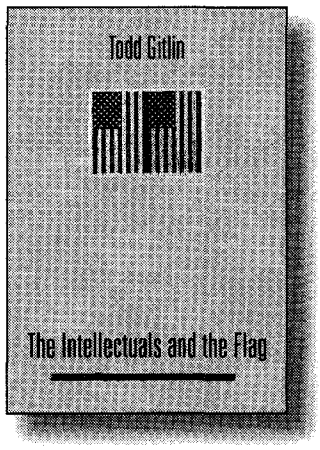
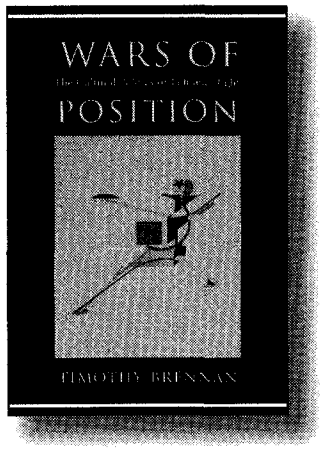


The Intellectuals and the Flag
Todd Gitlin

Todd Gitlin argues for a renewed sense of patriotism based on the ideals of sacrifice, tough-minded criticism, and a willingness to look anew at the global role of the United States in the aftermath of 9/11.

"Of all the voices to be heard since 9/11, Todd Gitlin's is among the most welcome ... This is a bracing and admirable book."
— Mark Lilla, author of *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*



Wars of Position
The Cultural Politics of Left and Right
Timothy Brennan

A bold and assertive new work explores the stifling of intellectual dissent in American life.

"A major contribution to the regeneration of critical theory. A compelling indictment of how the cultural left, in a fit of narcissistic self-regard and self-referentiality, abandoned all politics and purpose in the 1980s and 1990s, thereby leaving open the way for free-market triumphalism and the neoliberal ethic to dominate public discourse."
— David Harvey, author of *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*

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There are other problems with this "green energy" source. As explained by Peter Anderson, executive director of the Center for a Competitive Waste Industry, in order to prevent uncontrolled fires, the vacuum force that landfill-gas wells use must be kept at a low suction point. Bioreactor landfills are not capped; they are only topped with a few feet of earth cover. If the vacuum is too strong, the wells will draw in air from above ground and can trigger an explosion. Preventing such dangerous mishaps by using lower pressure means that unknown amounts of toxic greenhouse gases escape undetected from even the most high-tech landfills. Also, with the uneven settling common in all landfills, the well's pipes can easily shift and break, seriously weakening the system's ability to collect the gas efficiently. This method for gathering the vaporous byproduct of buried garbage is still new, and still has flaws. To accept, as Brown does, that this is a perfectly functional system is to turn away from reality.

Brown mentions the bioreactor's potential to help "the land to be reclaimed sooner after the landfill has been closed." Bioreactors represent an opportunity for the waste giants to absolve themselves of post-closure liability for disposal sites, which currently stands at thirty years. Today, many waste handlers, as well as the EPA, admit that landfills, even the most advanced, will leak. It's not a question of if, it's when. Publicly traded firms like WMI are simply too risky an investment with such an albatross around their necks. If corporations like WMI can shed this responsibility, they will reduce their future financial obligations, enabling them to attract more capital to grow profits in the short run. That seems antithetical to the "environmental stewardship" Brown and her bosses profess. But we know what business these guys are really in—making money.

HEATHER ROGERS

THE LOVE THAT DARE NOT BLEAT ITS NAME

Tampa, Fla.

■ How I have loved Alexander Cockburn's columns over the years, but can't he slam W. without making up stuff about us Alabamians? ["Beat the Devil," Jan. 9/16] We don't fornicate with farm animals—that's Georgia.

MICHELLE BARRON

Palatka, Fla.

■ At a recent meeting of the displaced Great Plainers' SWLA (Sex With Livestock Anonymous), it was discussed and resolved: (1) Donate to the ASPCA; (2) Resist temptation and evil thought by becoming vegan; (3) Recognize that our despicable actions are nothing compared with drug-crazed, carpetbaggin' Yankees mugging and raping the elderly... Uh-oh, did we slip into Cockburn mode?

JIM MCGINN

OMISSION & CLARIFICATION

■ The translator for Bernard-Henri Lévy's "A Letter to the American Left," which appeared in the last issue, was Charlotte Mandell.

In Jeremy Scahill's "Exile on K Street" [Feb. 20], after noting that "it is a federal crime for a departed senior Congressional staffer to lobby his former boss for one year after leaving," the article highlights the case of Patrick McSwain, who served as chief of staff for former Congressman Randy Cunningham. The article quotes Alex Knott, head of the Center for Public Integrity's LobbyWatch, saying, "There's a strong chance" that McSwain violated federal law by lobbying Representative Cunningham immediately after leaving his staff in August 1999.

McSwain points out that under the applicable law, it is only Congressional staffers who make at least 75 percent of the Congress member's basic pay rate during any sixty-day period in their final year of employment who are precluded from lobbying their former bosses. While Congressional pay records indicate that McSwain, as Cunningham's highest-paid Washington staffer, received compensation above that level in the period immediately prior to his termination, the excess was apparently attributable to accrued vacation time, which does not count toward the 75 percent threshold. Accordingly, it appears that McSwain was not legally precluded from lobbying Cunningham.

The Nation regrets any misimpression that may have been created as to the legality of McSwain's activity. The fact that it may have been legal, however, doesn't make it right. We continue to find the spectacle of senior-aides-turned-lobbyists exploiting their insider connections in Congress to be unseemly and antidemocratic.

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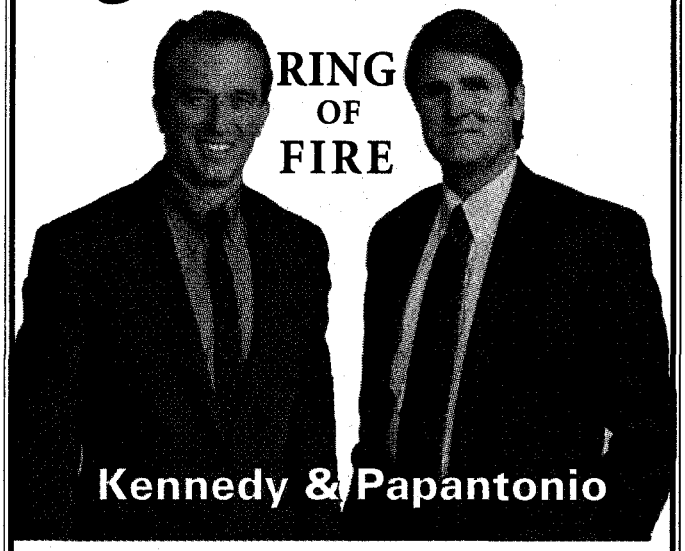

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PATRICIA WILLIAMS, Columbia Law School professor and *Nation* magazine columnist

Sponsored by The Nation Institute, Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, and the Forever Free Project.

COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

Church committee in 1975 led Pulitzer Prize–winning *Times* reporter Harrison Salisbury to file a Freedom of Information Act request for his FBI file.

Salisbury's suspicions proved correct. His file confirmed that he had been the subject of two name-check requests. The Eisenhower Administration had ordered one in 1954, when Salisbury returned home from Moscow, where he had been chief *Times* correspondent. More ominous, in 1966, when Salisbury traveled to Hanoi and sent back reports debunking the President's claims that US "precision bombing" was hitting only North Vietnamese military targets, the Johnson Administration requested a name check.

Salisbury's FBI file also contained reports sent to the FBI by the NSA. Because these reports originated outside the bureau, FBI officials, in response to the FOIA request, forwarded them to the NSA for review and release. Claiming "national security" grounds, NSA officials refused to disclose them or any other reports it had on Salisbury. When the *Times* reporter brought suit demanding their release, the courts upheld the NSA claim.

Because of this ruling, we do not now know whether the NSA deliberately targeted Salisbury as a reporter or had simply swept up his messages among the flow of communications from or to Communist areas (Moscow, Hanoi). And because the NSA reports remain classified, it is also impossible to discover how this information was used. What we do know is that even though Salisbury's actions were those of a reporter and not a spy, NSA officials, at a minimum, had forwarded the intercepted information to the FBI.

The Salisbury intercepts, NSC wiretaps and Huston Plan initiatives illustrate how Presidents used wiretaps under a cloak of secrecy not to further legitimate national security interests but to advance their own aims. This ability to conduct policy secretly also confirms the indifference of White House officials to the rule of law, exemplified in the Huston Plan's stark recommendation of "clearly illegal" activities.

In the course of the Church committee's investigation into presidential abuse of the intelligence agencies, investigators questioned Nixon about the Huston Plan. Nixon, who by then had resigned the presidency to avoid impeachment, offered a rationale that strikingly resembles the royal prerogative: "It is quite obvious that there are certain inherently governmental actions which if undertaken by the sovereign...are lawful but which if undertaken by private persons are not.... But it is naive to attempt to characterize activities a President might authorize as 'legal' or 'illegal' without reference to the circumstances under which he concludes that the activity is necessary."

Although his language is less blatant, George Bush is claiming the same imperial powers today. As the above history shows, no President should be trusted to wiretap secretly and without any independent review to further a claimed public interest.

ATHAN G. THEOHARIS

Athan G. Theoharis, a professor of history at Marquette University, is the author, most recently, of The FBI and American Democracy: A Brief Critical History *(Kansas).*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

The Palestinian Patient

RAJA SHEHADEH

GATE OF THE SUN.
By Elias Khoury.
Archipelago. 539 pp. $26.

Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews have fundamentally different attitudes toward the origins of the conflict that at once divides and binds them. The number of Israeli books about the early settlements and the 1948 war—histories, memoirs, novels—exceeds by far the number of those written by Palestinians. In the face of a work like Joan Peters's *From Time Immemorial*, which drew upon spurious demographic "data" to deny that Palestinians were ever the majority in their own land, a Palestinian is angered but not moved to action. Indeed, the rebuttal to Peters came not from a Palestinian but from Norman Finkelstein, an American Jew.

This may seem strange, but it is not. For the question of whether Palestinians did or did not exist in Palestine when the first Zionist settlers arrived is more of an American/Israeli issue than a Palestinian one, as is the question of whether Palestinians were driven from their homeland. Among Palestinians there is no debate about their roots in Palestine, or about the causes of their dispossession. They either had family living in 1948 Palestine or heard from those who had family about what life was like and the circumstances under which they were forced to flee. A Palestinian author writing in Arabic for an Arab audience is not weighed down by the burden of having to prove anything about the *Nakba*, "the catastrophe."

Not so for Palestinian authors writing in English for a Western audience. This may explain why much of the historical work on the *Nakba* by Palestinians such as Walid Khalidi and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod was written originally in English—and why the Israeli "new" historians who reached the same conclusions much, much later found it easier to persuade readers in the West that the 1948 refugees had not simply left of their own accord. As Edward Said frequently observed, part of being Palestinian is being denied the right to narrate one's own experience.

The same burden of proof under which Palestinian historians have labored applies with equal force to novelists and poets, whose evocation of the *Nakba* is almost always approached with suspicion—the suspicion being that the objective behind the work is propagandistic rather than artistic. As a result, imaginative writing by Palestinians is often assessed by Western critics according to narrowly political rather than aesthetic criteria, something few novelists would welcome, even if the reviews were favorable. It is no wonder that the number of literary works by Palestinians that have been published and become well-known in the United States is very small indeed.

This political rather than literary reception is likely to be the fate of Elias Khoury's epic novel *Gate of the Sun* (*Bab al-Shams*), first published in Arabic in 1998 and just released in English by Archipelago Books in

Raja Shehadeh, a writer in Ramallah, is the author of numerous books, including Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine *(Penguin).*

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an excellent translation by Humphrey Davies. Khoury is a Lebanese writer who has listened very carefully to the testimony of people who have been living in refugee camps in Lebanon since they were driven out of Palestine by Zionist forces in 1948. His novel is inspired by these accounts. When *Gate of the Sun* was published in Hebrew in 2002, the veracity of Khoury's chronicle of the *Nakba* stirred controversy (although the book was praised by some Israeli critics), and this could become an issue in the United States. That would be unfortunate, since Khoury's novel is a work of literature, not oral history.

When *Gate of the Sun* was first published, it received high praise in the Arab world, especially among Palestinians. (It was also adapted by Egyptian director Yousry Nasrallah into a four-hour film, shown at a few festivals in the States.) Palestine has produced some distinguished novelists, notably Emile Habiby and Ghassan Kanafani, both of whom explored the Palestinian condition of statelessness, exile and dispersion. Yet neither Habiby, with his absurdist vision of the experience of Palestinians who stayed behind in Israel (*The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist*), nor Kanafani, with his bitter tales of Palestinian laborers in the Gulf (*Men in the Sun*), wrote directly about the *Nakba*, preferring to examine its reverberations instead. Indeed, there are so few novels about the *Nakba* that many Palestinians were grateful to Khoury simply for giving voice to their memories of the most traumatic and defining moment in their history.

The *Nakba* has achieved such mythic dimensions in the Arab world that many Arabs are tempted to believe the events took place in one blow: One day there were Arabs in Palestine, and the next they were gone. In fact, for at least three months after the 1949 armistice the borders between the Jewish state and its Arab neighbors were open and Israel lacked the means to prevent infiltrators (the overwhelming majority of whom were simply seeking to return to their land, not to carry out guerrilla attacks). "Slipping across from Lebanon to Galilee," Khoury suggests, continued until the mid-1950s. He writes not only of the expulsion of the refugees but also of those who, once in Lebanon, smuggled themselves back into Palestine for short periods of time.

Arab governments did not encourage these efforts, as my father learned. After the Palestinian exodus from Jaffa, many of the townspeople, including our family, ended up in Jordanian-ruled Ramallah, as did many of those driven from Lydda and Ramle. Soon after, my father helped organize a meeting where a mass return of the refugees was proposed while the borders were still porous. The next morning, the Jordanian military arrested my father and warned that he would be kept behind bars if he ever floated this proposal again. The Arab regimes, for all their rhetorical bravado, agreed to the creation of Israel. They helped prevent the return of the refugees and the reversal of the 1948 Israeli military conquest.

Khoury is one of the few Arab novelists who have told the story of the dispossession of the Palestinians in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

The secret history of Palestinian border infiltrations into Israel in the early years of the state is a central element of Khoury's story, and it gives *Gate of the Sun* much of its novelty and power. The protagonist, Yunes al-Asadi, a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, makes a number of secret trips to Deir al-Asad, the village he was forced to leave in 1948. During these infiltrations he has to watch out for both the Lebanese and the Israeli armies. As the novel shows, for those who, like Yunes, were willing to risk the journey in order to attend to unfinished personal business, the *Nakba* did not immediately create an irreversible situation. By imagining the movement across the open border between Lebanon and the newly created state of Israel, Khoury brings out the complexity that is often suppressed in the official narratives of 1948.

On one of his first infiltrations, Yunes is reunited with his wife, Nahilah, who stayed behind. She tells him how the Israelis took the land and how their son's head was crushed by "a huge stone [that] had fallen on him" while he was playing with the children in the nearby settlement. She runs to the military governor's headquarters and asks for a permit to take her son to the hospital in Acre. There she is interrogated about her husband for three hours. Meanwhile, her son dies. After learning of Ibrahim's death, Yunes is eager for revenge, but he decides that individual reprisal is "worthless" and goes back to Lebanon to organize Palestinians into a guerrilla army. He chooses war over revenge and emerges as a legendary resistance leader. But Khoury is not uncritical of the Palestinian resistance, which he portrays as purely reactive. He takes us through the movement's different phases, from the days when its headquarters were in Jordan to the Lebanese Civil War, when Yunes serves in the Lebanon Regional Command of the Fatah Movement. Each phase leads "back to the beginning," as Yunes frequently laments, leaving him to pick up the pieces and start over again.

Yunes's story is recounted by Khalil Ayyoub, his caretaker at the Galilee Hospital in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, where Yunes has been rushed following "an explosion in the brain causing permanent damage." Khalil is called a doctor but really isn't one. He is, in fact, a former PLO political commissar who studied field medicine in China. He has been talking to Yunes for the past three months, trying to rouse him from his coma. "Is he dead or alive?" Khalil wonders. "I don't know—am I helping or tormenting him?"

Frustrated by Yunes's silence, Khalil seeks the advice of Umm Hassan, the only midwife in Shatila, who despite her own childlessness is described as the "mother of all our mothers" from the Galilee. In the opening pages of the novel, we are told that Umm Hassan is a woman who "always told the truth." She knew, for example, that the 1967 war would only bring disaster, and she predicted that "Palestine would not come back until all of us had died." When Khalil complains that Yunes can't speak, she insists that he can: "It's up to you to hear his voice." Although Khalil still can't hear Yunes, who according to his real doctors is "clinically dead," he refuses to give up hope, promising to "hold conversations with you and tell you stories. I'll tell you everything. What do you say—I'll make tea, and we'll sit on the low chairs in front of your house and tell tales!"

Thus begins the novel's Scheherazade voyage, which stretches out over 539 pages. But whereas the tales in *Thousand and One Nights* are funny and bawdy, here the tales are recounted to a dying, if not already dead, man with great solemnity, as if the narrator speaking on his behalf were taking part in a religious ceremony. There is none of the black humor and irony that have inflected the Palestinian response to many generations of interminable suffering. And Khalil's second-person narration of the dying man's life often results in awkward constructions that can test one's patience, making it even harder for the reader to find his way in this labyrinth of overlapping stories. The silence of the man to whom the stories are told can also be

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infuriating. But then, Khoury may have intended to provoke such a reaction, for the comatose man—a leader of a national liberation movement, still in exile and unable to speak—is laden with symbolism.

As this scenario suggests, *Gate of the Sun* is a novel of prodigious ambition, seeking to evoke the full sweep of Palestinian history. Most Palestinian novelists have preferred to illuminate specific aspects of the Palestinian experience, and for good reason. That experience has been so eventful, so turbulent, so fragmented and so complicated—intertwined with the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the cold war, inter-Arab politics, the events of Black September in Jordan, the Lebanese Civil War and the 1991 Gulf War—that it seems to defy dramatization, even while inviting it. The story unfolds on an almost mythic plane, a plane much vaster than that of the novel. Khoury seems aware of this problem; his narrator observes at one point that the novelist Ghassan Kanafani didn't write about Yunes's experience of the *Nakba* "because he was looking for mythic stories, and yours was just the story of a man in love." Yet *Gate of the Sun* is not so much the intimate story of a man in love as the allegorical tale of an entire people.

The novel opens, significantly, on November 20, 1995, two months after the Interim Agreement (Oslo II) was signed between the PLO and Israel, an agreement that addressed the condition of Palestinians in the occupied territories while leaving out the Palestinian refugees scattered throughout the Arab world. Oslo II was met with cries of betrayal in the camps, which have evolved into a permanent home to several generations of Palestinians, especially in Khoury's Lebanon, where as many as 350,000 Palestinian refugees wait to return home. In a sense, Yunes stands for all those refugees abandoned by the Palestinian negotiators at Oslo, with the stroke of a pen. (It is this same leadership that suffered a resounding defeat in the general elections on January 25 in the occupied territories.)

When Yunes is brought to the hospital at the opening of the novel, he is immediately pronounced dead, and hospital administrators don't want to assign a room to him. Khalil, however, rejects this judgment and, invoking a medical authority he does not actually possess, finds a room for him. By telling Yunes stories, the "doctor" hopes to resuscitate his patient. But can narrative and remembrance provide the sustenance of Palestinian survival and endurance? Khalil, exasperated, asks Yunes:

> Do you believe we can construct our country out of these ambiguous stories? And why do we have to construct it? People inherit their countries as they inherit their languages. Why do we, of all the peoples of the world, have to invent our country every day so everything isn't lost and we find we've fallen into eternal sleep?

Khoury's answer seems to be that storytelling is a defeated nation's way of preserving its memories, keeping itself alive and reminding the world of its existence, its refusal to surrender. Despite the tragic history it recounts, *Gate of the Sun* is an affirmative book, insisting that despite the recent betrayals of its leaders, Palestine is not dead, that, in Khalil's words, Palestinians continue "seeking the aroma of life and are waiting." Yet Khoury seems to admit the limits of storytelling as an act of resistance, since it can draw one further away from the reality it is intended to recall. And for Yunes, reality seems to be slipping away. At one point, Khalil asks him whether he knows where he is now, and then answers:

> Everything here isn't itself but a simulacrum of itself. We say *house* but we don't live in houses, we live in places that resemble houses. We say *Beirut* but we aren't really in Beirut, we're in a semblance of Beirut. I say *doctor* but I'm not a doctor, I'm just pretending to be one. Even the camp itself—we say we're in the Shatila camp, but after the War of the Camps and the destruction of eighty percent of Shatila's houses, it's no longer a camp, it's just a semblance of a camp.

It is hard to resist the temptation to read such passages allegorically. The hospital could represent Palestine (or the PLO) after Oslo II, a sick house run by a sham doctor, a semblance of a hospital where everything is breaking down and where the residents are nurtured by listening to stories that have no beginning or end—a "country of words," as the poet Mahmoud Darwish bitterly wrote.

At the risk of contradicting my own warning against reading novels about Palestine for their political rather than literary merits, I could not help bristling somewhat at Khoury's depiction of Palestine as an endless hall of mirrors with little or no relationship to reality. To be sure, this is the experience of Palestine for those refugees who have been stranded for more than half a century (and, perhaps, for those Palestinians who have remained in what is now Israel, and watched their country progressively disappear over time), and Khoury's intention to assert the reality of the refugees and keep their stories alive is admirable. But he overlooks those parts of Palestine that remain formally outside Israel and where the majority of Palestinians are still living under occupation. For Palestinians in places like Ramallah, where I live, Palestine is a physical reality, not simply an endless web of stories.

The proliferation of stories also presents a problem for *Gate of the Sun* as a work of literature, and it is as a novel, not as a political commentary or oral history, that Khoury's book must be assessed. Just before the end of Part One, Khalil stands up and declares: "For three months I've been telling you stories, some of which I know and some of which I don't. And you're incapable of correcting my errors, so I make mistakes once in a while.... My throat's dry from so much talking. I'm dried up, I've become desiccated." Khalil says he feels as if he is "a prisoner of the story. I'm drowning. Water surrounds me. I swallow water and swallow words and tell the story." These words could express the state of the reader, who feels just as lost in a maze of stories without the firm command of an author in control of his material. The idea for the book is brilliant, but the execution is uneven at best.

In the second part of *Gate of the Sun*, Khalil expresses his fear of "a history that has only one version. History has dozens of versions, and for it to ossify into one leads only to death." Perhaps it was to avoid this that Khoury ventured into territory rarely visited by Arab novelists: the Holocaust. Khoury describes his narrator imagining Umm Hassan "wandering in the fields among the thousands of others without homes." This waking nightmare continues, but the scene suddenly shifts from Palestine to Nazi-occupied Europe: "I see her, and I hear the whistle of the train...when the refugees were rounded up and distributed around the various suburbs, which then turned into camps. The whistle rings in my ears. I see the people being led toward the final train. I see the trains, and I shudder. Then I see myself loaded into a basin and carried on a woman's head. I confess I'm scared." He declares: "You and I and every human being on the face of the planet should have known and not stood by in silence, should have prevented that beast from destroying its victims in that barbaric, unprecedented manner. Not because the victims were Jews but because their death meant the death of humanity within us...we—you—were outside his-

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tory, so you became its second victim."

Since Israel depicted itself as the redemption after the European catastrophe, Khoury suggests, Palestinians were suddenly forced to see themselves through the prism of Jewish history. Here Khalil, until now a confused and broken man, suddenly overcomes his paralysis and improbably turns into a seer, a prophet, telling Yunes, "We mustn't see ourselves only in their [the Jews'] mirror, for they're prisoners of one story [the Holocaust], as though the story had abbreviated and ossified them. Please, Father—we mustn't become just one story. Even you, even Nahilah—please let me liberate you from your love story, for I see you as a man who betrays and repents and loves and fears and dies. Believe me, this is the only way if we're not to ossify and die. You haven't ossified into one story. You will die, but you'll be free. Free of everything, even free of your own story." Earlier, he says, "You saw your own image in their mirrors.... I do see a mirror broken into two halves, which can only be mended by joining the parts together. Dear God, this is the tragedy: to see two halves that come together only in war and ruination."

This image of Palestinians and Israelis as two halves of a broken mirror is striking, but the change in tone is jarring, the narrator's revelations unconvincing. Nor are the encounters with Jews who have left Lebanon to settle in Israel any more convincing. In one of Khalil's tales, Umm Hassan returns home to what has become the northern Israeli settlement of Beyt ha-Emek, where she meets Ella Dweik, a Lebanese Jew living in the house that once belonged to her. Dweik welcomes her, saying, "I've been waiting for you for a long time." When she discovers that Umm Hassan now lives in a camp in Beirut, her eyes fill with tears, and she says that she too is from Beirut. "They brought me from there when I was twelve," she recalls. "I left Beirut and came to this dreary, bleak land." When Umm Hassan asks her how this happened, she replies, "What do you mean, how did that happen? I've no idea. You're living in Beirut and you've come here to cry? I'm the one who should be crying. Get up, my friend, and go. Send me to Beirut and take this wretched land back." While Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim countries are known to long for their ancestral homes, Ella Dweik's cry that she has "no idea" why she left Lebanon for Israel strikes a false note, as does her remark that she has been "waiting" for Umm Hassan, a woman who, after all, has the keys to the house Dweik now occupies. The point Khoury is making is an admirable one: that the destinies of these women, secret sharers of the intimate history of Palestine, are intertwined, and that the events of 1948 shattered the ties between Arabs and Jews native to the region. Yet the women are ciphers, embodiments of ideas rather than fully realized characters. As a result, the scene is contrived and sentimental rather than moving.

Reading *Gate of the Sun*, one has the impression that Khoury was so haunted by the anecdotes he was told that he could not bear to part with any of them—the story of the woman who left her home while the zucchini was still on the fire, the woman who lost her children while fleeing Palestine, the adventures of those who stayed behind and the hardships they faced, the journeys of those who acquired foreign passports in the West that enabled them to visit Israel. Palestinian refugees are all too familiar with these tales, but the urge to tell every one of them has produced a cluttered, crowded book. And the narrative conceit of having Khalil speak for the man in the coma and convey to us what he did and what he must have thought and felt, while repeatedly asking for his reactions and posing questions that never get answered, makes this long novel feel very long indeed.

The *Nakba* was the formative event for the Palestinians as a nation, particularly for the refugees in Lebanon who remain in camps and whose fate has been darker than that of any other Palestinian group. Khoury listened to their tales with compassion and commitment. He is among the few who have given literary expression to their memories. Palestinians tend to expect that every work about Palestine must encompass the whole of the Palestinian experience. It is unfortunate that Khoury, who is not Palestinian, was also motivated to achieve this impossible goal. Still, *Gate of the Sun* is important for trying to capture the Palestinian experience during and after 1948. Although it overreaches, the novel is unique and powerful, and Archipelago Books is to be commended for making it available to an American audience. ■

The Man Who Heard It All

PAUL GRIFFITHS

THE OXFORD HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC. By Richard Taruskin. Oxford. 4,154 pp. $699.

This is an astounding achievement. *The Oxford History of Western Music* fills five stout volumes (discounting a sixth given over to the index, bibliography and other such matters), and yet Richard Taruskin can justifiably speak of it as a single book. To be sure, it travels far and wide in pursuing a millennium's ramshackle production of songs and dances, keyboard suites and operas, sacred chants and church cantatas, symphonies and chamber works, electronic compositions and virtuoso showpieces, a good number of them quoted in music type so that competent keyboard players can eavesdrop on this multicolored parade as it goes along. Meanwhile, however, the surrounding text keeps its steady voice of thoughtful inquiry, painstaking analysis, consistent generosity and courteous address to the reader. Nothing like this book has been attempted since the nineteenth century, and as the author ruefully remarks, nothing like it may be written again.

Taruskin makes clear his reason for this proud pessimism. The coherence of Western "classical" music—the jumble of types only partly enumerated above—lies in notation (though due acknowledgment is given here to what never was notated and so has been lost). Just as we can observe the emergence of clearly legible notation in the eleventh century, so we seem in Taruskin's view to be witnessing its demise, as some of the composers he treats in his last chapter, from Charles Dodge to Laurie Anderson, go off into territories where notation is no longer of any use, and as the possibility arises with the spread of digital equipment that we may all compose, perform and even disseminate our own music without thought of staves, clefs and quarter notes.

In a sense, this book expresses the magnificence and melancholy of its age. Scholarship—some of it Taruskin's own, on

Paul Griffiths is the author of several books on music, including, most recently, The Penguin Companion to Classical Music *and* The Substance of Things Heard: Writings About Music *(Rochester).*

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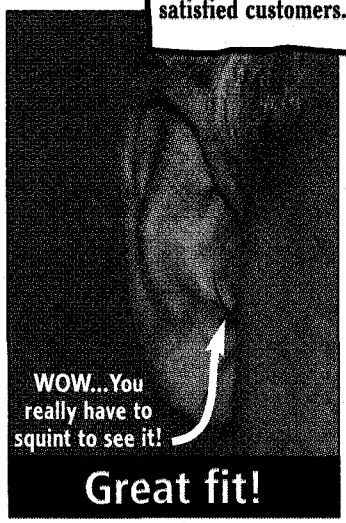

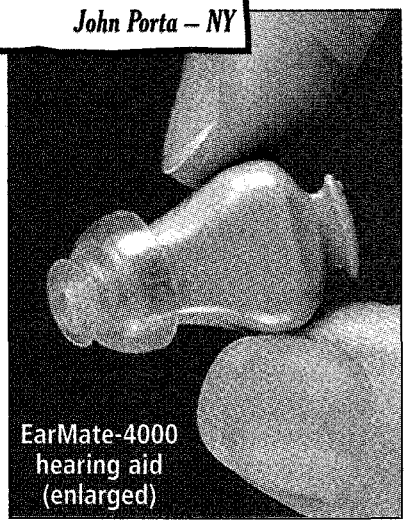

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composers as widely separated in time as Stravinsky and the fifteenth-century master Antoine Busnoys—has brought into view, and often into performance, a vast amount of music that was only dimly known half a century ago. But that expansion of knowledge and experience has been accompanied, unavoidably, by doubts about the universal validity of the central repertory, or canon, that built up around the works of perhaps just a dozen composers from Bach to Mahler, nearly all of them not only dead white males but dead white German-speaking males.

Taruskin shares those doubts, and he voices them in ways that demand serious consideration. His posture is, however, complex and subtle, which is to say humane. The canon is a historical phenomenon, and its history is duly traced. But it is also still with us. The music performed in our concert halls and opera houses, recorded by our ever more hard-pressed record companies and taught in our (some would say) equally embattled music courses is still overwhelmingly that of the DWGMs. Accordingly, this is the music—along with that of DWIMs, DWFMs, DWEMS and eventually DWRMs—that provides Taruskin with his principal subject matter.

As Taruskin recognizes, it is notation that makes the history of Western music the story not only of what was but of what is. This story is, of course, more than a sequence of musical scores, for as he makes clear, a notated work changes through time as our listening is tempered by shifts in interpretation and by an accumulation of responses. Yet these changes could occur only because these works were passed down, and until recording came along notation provided the only means of preservation. Turning, then, to look at specific pieces of notated music without ignoring how the image is altered by so many social and historical lenses, Taruskin offers illuminating readings. He shows in precise detail, for instance, how Palestrina in his mass *Missa Papae Marcelli* can "create opulence out of sheer grammatical necessity"; how the slow movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 39 represents the repression of "a disagreeable passing thought"; how a key scene in Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* realizes "the magnificent irony whereby Lucia's madness, an unmitigated catastrophe to its [onstage] observers, is a balm and solace to her"; and how Scriabin (whose importance to post-tonal harmony is cogently affirmed here) extended harmony to create "what might be called a musical hyperspace." Each of these conclusions is supported by several pages of close listening, and the examples could be multiplied many times over.

Taruskin's book is an invitation to a deeper awareness of many compositions and many ways of hearing. Yet despite its remarkable length, it makes no claims to comprehensiveness. Taruskin is punctilious, and again justifiably proud, in emphasizing that his book is a work of history, not a survey of the repertory. He disarms criticism on grounds of omission by cheerfully admitting he has ignored such side-branch composers as Vaughan Williams, who maintained the British symphonic tradition into the mid-twentieth century, and the American maverick Conlon Nancarrow, who, living in self-imposed exile in Mexico City, confined himself almost exclusively to elaborate rhythmic machinations for player piano. Of course, history is under no compulsion to be all-inclusive; because, as Taruskin writes, history seeks not so much to chronicle the past as to "explain why and how things happened as they did," it tends to be drawn to what is innovative and generative (though one might have thought Nancarrow would qualify on exactly those criteria). But one can almost hear Taruskin chafing at this. He wants to honor all. He staunchly refutes the notion that the artists of any given time can be neatly divided into progressives and conservatives, and even in the forward-streaming twentieth century he salutes such a small-time traditionalist as the Russian composer Nikolai Medtner.

Nearly 4,000 pages long, Taruskin's multivolume history of Western art music expresses the magnificence and melancholy of its age.

He allows himself to do so, though, only because he can demonstrate "details of surprising interest" in a Medtner piano piece of 1912, and because he can make a few measures open up large questions, questions it is the historian's duty not to answer but to clarify. Of Medtner's work, he asks, "Does the music accomplish less, or mean something different, because it comes later?"—i.e., thirty years after Brahms, when the harmonic point at issue would have been regarded as novel. Characteristically unanswered, it is a question that inevitably echoes as time slowly passes through these pages.

Very few other minor composers raise the big questions, in Taruskin's account. We hear from Louis Spohr, for example, as a contemporary witness to Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth symphonies, and to Paganini, but of Spohr's own music there is not a whisper. Taruskin is not trying to substitute one canon for another, and the only area in which he criticizes the canon's exclusiveness concerns the omission of women. He mentions recent efforts at "mainstreaming" women composers, and throws his own weight behind Barbara Strozzi, Fanny Mendelssohn and Amy Beach. But the more powerful conclusion he draws is that evident defects in the canon are best answered by a skeptical attitude to all received opinion. If most of the revered masters and masterpieces remain in place here, they do so because their qualities are being freshly judged.

Some, nevertheless, are dented. Taruskin insists—this is one of his central axioms—that the making of music is a social act, done by people for people. And though he asserts that our understanding of music is historically mediated, there may be strains—or rather stains—in the substance of a composition that cannot be ignored or erased. This is why he has little patience for *opera seria*, the dominant operatic form throughout most of the eighteenth century, which he describes as "an art invested with, and affirming, a social and political system—a system with which no one educated according to the principles of the Enlightenment (which is to say, just about anyone reading this book) could possibly sympathize today." If, three chapters later, an aria from one of Handel's operas in this genre is praised as "a triumph of dramatically structured music," Taruskin, remembering his earlier strictures, claims that Handel "was never a truly typical *seria* composer." Real *opera seria* is irremediable, and we should not be surprised to find it lost behind an impenetrable wall, for "the return of the castrato voice would be about as likely or as feasible as the return of public hangings."

But wait. Handel's operas require castrati, as much as do the operas of the "truly typical" suppliers Taruskin discusses in his earlier chapter. Moreover, works by these composers are now being revived to great acclaim. And one may say that the castrati have indeed returned, in the guise of star countertenors and mezzo-soprano cross-dressers who command the virtuosity, the allure and even the sexual mystique of their predecessors. Experiencing them

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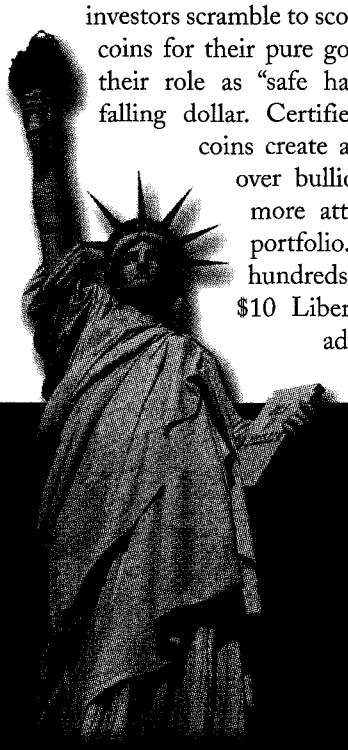

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in action, whether in the theater or on record, one has to doubt that their repertory truly affirms the divine right of kings and wonder if it is concerned instead with highly contemporary questions of self-invention and self-projection, of loyalty and deceit, of erotic power play, of love and its guarded frontiers.

Nevertheless, it may be easy to discount the politics of *opera seria* only because the memory of unquestioned absolute monarchy is so faint. The case is very different with nationalism (especially German nationalism), racism (especially anti-Semitism) and totalitarianism (especially in the Soviet Union and, again, Germany). Sometimes the blot may be an afterthought of history, the advantage of hindsight. Listening, say, to the tenor aria in the Bach cantata *Wo Gott der Herr*, we may "have greater reason than Bach's contemporaries ever had to wince at the sound of a high-pitched German voice stridently shouting reason down." But there are taints, too, that come from closer to the music's source.

To take another, more celebrated, example from Bach, how should we treat the moment in the St. John Passion where the Jews demand Christ's crucifixion? Is it enough to know that, according to Taruskin, Bach may never have met a Jew, and that he was merely following the Gospel story? Alternatively, as Taruskin puts it, "does Bach's music redeem the text?" (which perhaps it could do only by making us ignore the words being sung). As Taruskin also asks, Should we change the text? And who gets to decide?

And what happens when such problems are raised not by a brief passage in an enormous work but by a composer's whole ethos? We are used, perhaps overused, to the question being raised with respect to Wagner, whose anti-Semitism was an integral part of his worldview and, arguably, of his music theory (the notorious essay "Judaism in Music" being a case in point). But Taruskin also obliges us to think further about Brahms. Tracking Brahms's path toward his First Symphony in a closely considered passage—a characteristically Brahmsian passage in its density of consequence and range of reference—Taruskin draws into account the nationalist imperative behind the composer's absorption of German music from Bach to Wagner, an imperative that erupted in the little-known *Triumphlied*, which Brahms "reverently dedicated" to the new German Kaiser, Wilhelm I. Clearly, Taruskin wants to share his admiration for "the first major composer who grew up within, and learned to cope with, our modern conception of 'classical music,'" but he wants to convey a certain circumspection.

Perhaps this is the book's chief lesson, that our listening can never be wholly innocent or engulfing, that we cannot fully participate in what Taruskin calls the "music trance," a phenomenon he traces to the early nineteenth century. We no longer have the luxury of letting our guard drop.

The catastrophes of war, genocide and totalitarian dictatorships have made it impossible to compose—or listen—without irony.

As Taruskin observes, the catastrophes experienced by the West in the twentieth century—World War I; the totalitarian dictatorships of the century's second quarter, which exacted their cost in further war and genocide; and the development of nuclear weapons—made it impossible to compose without irony. Irony, too, is our lot as listeners.

Brahms may give us pause, as well, in another way. Turning to the composer's First String Quartet, Taruskin shows how the effect of the opening movement "turns on tinycraft, on minute motivic relations." This elicits his admiration and expository skills, finely on display over ten pages. But it also provokes some cautionary questions. If, as he posits, the rewards of Brahms's chamber music include "the self-satisfaction of belonging to a self-defined elite," do these works, by their difficulty, "foster social division"? And if such anxieties are awakened by an accessible Romantic composer such as Brahms, they are even more at stake when Taruskin moves on to Modernists like Schoenberg and Milton Babbitt. (Schoenberg, born in 1874, dreamed that workers would one day hum his twelve-tone compositions; Babbitt, born in 1916 and shorn of utopian illusions, infamously raised the question "Who Cares If You Listen?" the title of his 1958 article in *High Fidelity*.)

It is, however, a pretty ragtag elite that turns out for a Babbitt performance in New York—students, professional musicians, an assortment of people who share only a passion for the composer, friends of the performers, the odd writer or visual artist, perhaps two critics and some zealous supporters of whatever hall is being used. Unlike a true elite, this audience does not gain any privileges within society—which is not to say that privileges (of education, of leisure) may not be required for most of them to be there. Moreover, difficult music is far from a leading cause of "social division" in the contemporary West. Indeed, talk of "elite genres," a term Taruskin uses very early, may distract attention from the real sources of inequality.

Such factors are surely implicated when, as Taruskin observes, sales of "classical" recordings represent only 3 percent of the market, to which one might add that the sector of the population regularly attending "classical" concerts is smaller still. As a symptom of social division, not a cause, this must alert us to severe failures in our culture. And how many, one may wonder, will read through the nearly 4,000 pages of this book? Here is more irony, more sadness in the grandeur, for the fate of this majestic river of prose, full of so many fascinating eddies but with its main currents going along strong, is most likely to be sampled piecemeal by students in need of a quick drink for the purposes of an assignment. At least they will find the water clear and sustaining.

The diminishing size of the audience very much impinges on Taruskin's argument with respect to music since Brahms, and even a little before. As he sees it, composers entering the fully developed world of "classical" music—a world run not by popes, emperors, dukes and bishops but by commerce—have been subject to two kinds of validation: social, coming from the audience, and historical, coming from how those composers believe music ought to evolve. Implicit in this latter view is "historicism," the doctrine that there is an engine of change driving history in a particular direction.

That is how it must have seemed to Franz Brendel, whom Taruskin credits as the pioneer of musical historicism. Brendel, writing his own history of music in the middle of the nineteenth century, could look back on several decades of growth in harmonic and orchestral complexity, of advance in keyboard technique and construction, and of expansion among institutions promoting amateur music-making. Progress still seemed inescapable to Schoenberg in 1908, as he took what he regarded as the logical and necessary leap into "atonality" (a term Taruskin rightly mistrusts, since no music can totally lack special motifs, intervals or notes). Forty years later, the same dynamism was again felt by Pierre Boulez. And even now, if we can no longer believe music is heading in a single direction, we might want a

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new piece to be moving somewhere. This is because historicism is not a dogma but a consequence of living in a musical world where classics are venerated—a world in which the new has to justify itself by being in some measure the same as the old (achieving a comparable level of distinction) and in some measure different. If, therefore, all composers today are historicists, all who want to be heard depend also on the support of some kind of society, which might include universities, foundations, performers, publishers and radio stations.

It is evident throughout the book that Taruskin views music as social discourse, though his society is chiefly one of listeners: of patrons, critics, historians and musicologists, and of contemporary audiences, responding, say, to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in ways that have been determined not only by Beethoven (though, indeed, by him more than anyone else) but also by analysts who have elucidated the work's unity and even to some degree by earlier composers, such as Mozart, to whom Beethoven listened. There is a glancing nod, as well, to "the 'interpretations' of master performers," but none are so much as named, and the contributions of performing musicians—or of instrument makers, music publishers, teachers, architects, agents, managers, record producers, broadcasters—are scarcely considered. In his introduction Taruskin quotes Anthony Trollope's fond memory of a servant who came each morning with coffee so that the writer could be at work at 5:30, and remarks, "Quite a few coffee porters, so to speak, will figure in the pages that follow." But they do not. This is a history of composers and even more so of compositions. It is a great expounding—much of it in the present tense—of what we can hear.

The present tense begins to slip away, oddly, as Taruskin reaches modern times. Many compositions are discussed as events in the past, for the perfectly sound reason that they have become so by this point in history. As Taruskin notes, the standard operatic repertory—the repertory the audience knows and demands—closes with Puccini's *Turandot* (1926), after which the movies took over opera's specialties of big characters and big voices, revealed intimacy and exotic location. Where concert music is concerned, the repertory's endpoint is perhaps the last of Shostakovich's quartets (1974)—though leaving aside the unique and complex case of that composer's reception (clearheadedly considered here), the limit might have to be placed in the mid-1940s, at works by Bartók, Britten and Copland.

In a peculiarly modern paradox, many compositions of the recent past that are recognized as historically important and duly feature in a music history—the piano pieces John Cage created by chance procedures in the 1950s, Krzysztof Penderecki's sonic dramas of the 1960s (notably *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*), David Del Tredici's Alice fantasies of the 1970s, collages by John Zorn from the 1980s—are more distant than troubadour songs, because they have lacked the slow integration into common experience needed to make them what, as Taruskin would seem to understand it, music is: the sound of something not given once and for all but forever transforming itself as it bounces among many different hearings.

This must be why Taruskin vouchsafes his close attention to so few compositions of the last fifty years: La Monte Young's String Trio (1958), Elliott Carter's Second Quartet (1959) and Double Concerto (1961), Babbitt's *Philomel* and Terry Riley's *In C* (both 1964), Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles* (1966), Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* (1974–76), Arvo

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Pärt's *Tabula rasa* and Fred Lerdahl's First String Quartet (both 1977), Alfred Schnittke's Concerto for Piano and Strings (1979), John Adams's opera *Nixon in China* (1987) and nothing since. Moreover, with the exception of the works by Pärt and Schnittke, these are all pieces by US citizens. Taruskin recalls that Brendel called the last chapter of his history "Decline"; here the sense in the final volume is of dissipation, and the note of optimism on the last page—"Our story ends, as it must, in the middle of things"—might have rung truer if notice had been given to composers like Harrison Birtwistle, Helmut Lachenmann, Salvatore Sciarrino, Kaija Saariaho, Hanspeter Kyburz and George Benjamin.

It is here, at the close, that the historian's passionate dispassion and sublime omniscience must be limited by the fact that he is speaking of his own time, and from his own location. It is here, too, that he finds his immense patience tried (by the Dutch minimalist Louis Andriessen)—though much earlier, and more surprisingly, given that he is the subject of a two-volume study by Taruskin, some testiness is directed at Stravinsky, disdained at least four times as an "aristocrat." But the fraying ends and nerves may even be welcome in revealing Taruskin as, after all, human. The scale of what he has done—what he has read, heard and analyzed, let alone what he has written—is almost not.

Decidedly prone to human error, though, are his publisher's efforts. Taruskin gracefully thanks a "small army of proofreaders, copyeditors, and factcheckers," but their care, alas, did not match his own. Inconsistencies have begun by page 6 of the first volume, and earlier still, on page 4, comes the first demonstrable mistake of fact: The Holy Roman Empire did not last, even in name, until World War I, because it was dissolved by Napoleon in 1806. Faults in the music examples surface throughout the text, down to *Nixon in China*, where two systems are out of order, and there are misnumberings of footnotes to the bitter end. The index is risible.

Never mind. Taruskin's book, singular in every possible way, will take its place on the short list of compendiums, going back to the ninth century, that have reviewed the musical world from a position of supreme authority. Like them it will change things. Like them it will last. ■

Labor Pains

BY KIM PHILLIPS-FEIN

SOLIDARITY FOR SALE: How Corruption Destroyed the Labor Movement and Undermined America's Promise.
By Robert Fitch. PublicAffairs. 412 pp. $28.50.

Midway through his new book on corruption in the American labor movement, *Solidarity for Sale*, Robert Fitch tells the story of one of the most famous anticorruption crusaders of all time: Martin Luther. It was, after all, outrage at corruption—priests who charged parishioners for indulgences, living large while making sinners pay for false redemption—that prompted Luther to nail his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the cathedral at Wittenberg. His critics charged him with harping on petty sins, insisting that the priests he assailed were exceptions to the rule. But Luther knew better. As Fitch puts it, "Neither the sale of indulgences nor the commerce in Church offices served as Luther's ultimate target. These were not 'abuses'; they were inevitable expressions of an institution that he charged was corrupt in its essence." His real target, in the end, was not a few bad pennies but the entire structure of the church. And the result was no piecemeal change but the Reformation.

Solidarity for Sale aims, in a way, to be Ninety-Five Theses for the American labor movement. The book is not so much a history as an exposé. Virtually every page contains revelations of vote fraud, election theft, payoffs, sweetheart deals, Mafia infiltration, pension fund looting and political betrayal, and it is populated by characters with nicknames like Diamond Joe, Dago Mike and Big Jim. But Fitch is a social critic as well as an investigative journalist, and his target is larger than a few wiseguys: He seeks to demonstrate that, like the church before the Reformation, American unions are rotten at the core, and that with few exceptions they have been this way virtually since birth. The crisis of American labor today reflects the corruption at the heart of the movement, if not its original sin; to rebuild unions, Fitch suggests, we must start all over again.

Fitch has a long career as a political reporter, going back to the late 1960s, when he worked for *Ramparts* magazine. Unlike his fellow *Ramparts* alum David Horowitz, who today denounces his former comrades as terrorist sympathizers, Fitch has consistently defined himself as a man of the left. He never went into academia full time, instead pursuing a career as a freelance journalist; the body of *Solidarity for Sale* is based on reporting he did at the *Village Voice*. (Full disclosure: He is also an old acquaintance of mine, although we haven't spoken for years.)

The question driving Fitch is the same one famously posed in 1906 by Werner Sombart: Why is there no socialism in the United States? The answer, for Fitch, is corruption—no other labor movement has been as infested with corruption as that of the United States. As a muckraking reporter, Fitch has always highlighted the role of individual elites and institutions in making history, as opposed to the grand, sweeping trends favored by academics. His analysis of the deindustrialization of New York City, for example, in his book *The Assassination of New York*, emphasized the role of Rockefeller real estate interests in seeking to remake downtown Manhattan as a playground for consumerism, over more abstract invocations of globalization and technological change. Similarly, in *Solidarity for Sale*, he blames the weakness and impotence of today's American labor movement not on political backlash, global capital or international competition but on the choices, actions and structures of unions. "The fundamental actors in American labor are institutions—the unions themselves," he writes.

The end of American labor, Fitch argues, lies in its beginning: the birth of the American Federation of Labor in 1886. The rise of craft unionism in the late nineteenth century meant the development of a unionism that was inherently exclusionary, as the crafts refused to organize unskilled (or black, or female) workers.

Kim Phillips-Fein is an assistant professor at NYU's Gallatin School. Her first book, on the role of business in the backlash against liberalism, will be published by W.W. Norton.

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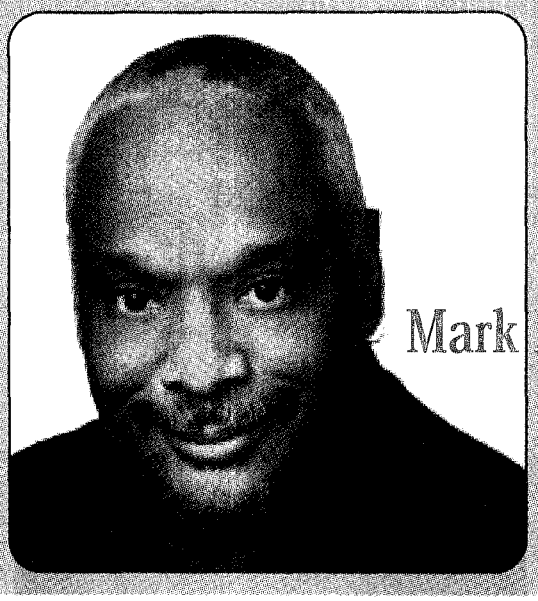

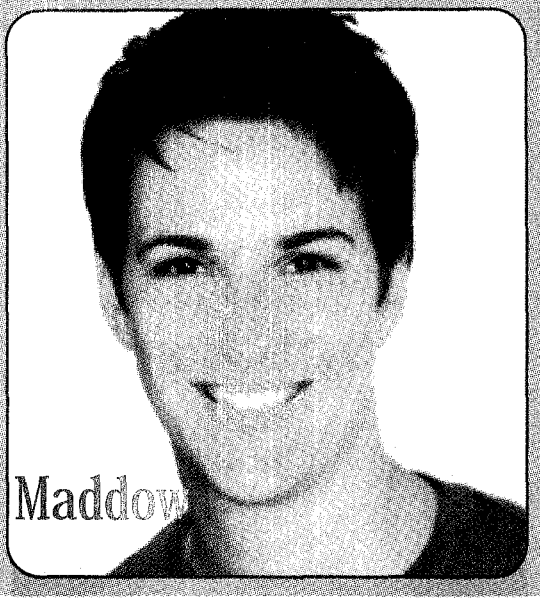

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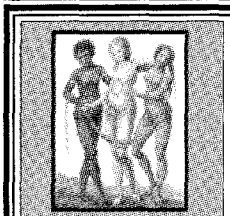
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Labor leaders like the AFL's Samuel Gompers opposed public health insurance plans and even eight-hour-day legislation. "If we can get an eight-hour law for the working people, then you will find that the working people themselves will fail to have any interest in your economic organization," he predicted in 1914.

What's more, in industries where employers were small and craft unions strong—as in construction—the unions could control who got jobs. Where other historians have seen job control unionism as a sign of labor's strength, or of pride in craft, Fitch argues that it created a culture of deferential, humiliating subservience, since workers' ability to earn their daily bread depended on the good graces of the business agent. The AFL unions proved susceptible to Mafia corruption, Fitch suggests, precisely because job control unionism established this culture of loyalty and fear. "Notwithstanding the muscling-in era of the 1920s and 1930s, the Mafia has been able to capture and maintain control of trade unions less through overt violence than through their mastery of the politics of job trust unionism," he writes.

What house of labor could be built on such a fragile foundation? Today, Fitch sees a labor movement that is incapable of either organizing workers or representing them effectively. In some cases, corruption refers to the mob infiltration of unions. The Laborers are "totally mobbed up," routinely making deals with employers to hire nonunion labor and pocketing part of the difference between union and nonunion wages while merrily looting the pension fund. (Fitch argues that such collusion with employers is more widespread than simple extortion.)

But even when the Mafia isn't directly involved—and it isn't in most of the unions Fitch chronicles—Fitch sees a labor leadership more interested in enriching itself than in improving its members' lives. He argues that AFSCME District Council 37—which represents New York City's public sector workers—is rife with petty theft and vote fraud. ("Everybody takes a little from the kitty," he quotes one union officer saying.) UNITE has taken payoffs to not enforce contracts at sweatshops in lower Manhattan. Teamsters reformer Ron Carey—"the most glittering mirage yet to deceive the travelers in labor's increasingly parched desert"—stole union funds to pay for his re-election campaign (Fitch largely discounts Carey's 2001 acquittal in the case). Self-serving labor leaders take weak political positions; like the AFL under Samuel Gompers, neither the AFL-CIO nor SEIU calls for national health insurance. Fitch argues that the structural problems of American labor—its culture of insularity and subservience—cannot be solved by new leadership. Indeed, one of his abiding themes is that the labor movement has historically proved impervious to reform: "Call it the Roach Motel syndrome. The leftists go in but they don't come out."

Fitch would like to abolish union shop contracts (which mandate that all workers at a given employer must join the union—workers typically vote on this provision in their first contract) and overturn the legal provision giving a union that wins an election the exclusive right to represent workers at a given workplace (the law was initially passed in part to fight company unions). Without these crutches, unions would lose their "monopoly," and healthy competition would revive the labor movement. Fitch's literary style, never what one would call restrained, becomes an all-out jeremiad in the closing pages of *Solidarity for Sale*. "No amount of 'democracy' can alter the fact that the AFL-CIO is rooted in compulsion, exclusion and monopoly," Fitch insists. "Forced labor is slavery; forced marriage is concubinage; forced sex is rape. Few acknowledge that forced unionism—unionism without consent—is despotism."

Union corruption is a difficult topic to write about, and Fitch deserves credit for his investigative zeal. Mobsters aren't known for their candid interviews or well-kept archives. Beyond this, employers have sought to tar unions with accusations of corruption ever since the earliest attempts to organize. Sorting out allegations from reality is tricky, especially since any exercise of working-class power can seem to employers like a corruption of the marketplace and of the natural order; they see collective bargaining, in the words of libertarian economist Ludvig von Mises, as "bargaining at the point of a gun." Finally, unionists themselves sometimes deny real corruption even when it exists, insisting that they are the victims of trumped-up employer charges. Nostalgia, machismo and sentimentality can lead union supporters to simply deny real wrongdoing in the face of all evidence.

But despite the facts Fitch unearths, *Solidarity for Sale* offers too sweeping an indictment to be persuasive. Although he emphasizes job control unionism, most of the unions he discusses (other than the Laborers and in some instances the Teamsters) don't actually work this

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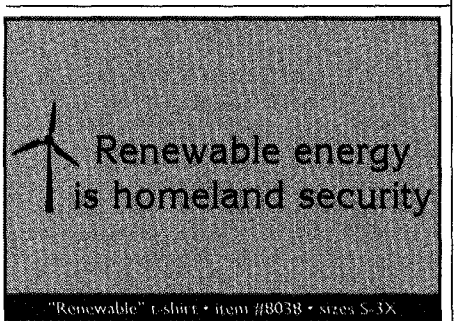

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way. In New York's public sector or even the garment factories, the boss, not the union, decides who works. At times Fitch's habit of dropping crime family names and his descriptions of labor leaders—who we are repeatedly told resemble "Afghan or Somalian warlords"—seem designed for shock value rather than analytic precision. His focus on the union shop might have been lifted from the campaigns of the National Association of Manufacturers during the 1950s, which sought to associate monopolies with unions in the public mind, or perhaps from the National Right To Work Committee. It's worth observing that the connection between union shops and corruption is far less clear than Fitch suggests. Industrial CIO unions like the UAW also fought hard to win union shops without succumbing to the same kind of corruption. Would outlawing the union shop lead to the rebirth of labor? Currently twenty-two states have Right To Work laws, making the union shop contract illegal. While some of these states (most notably Nevada) have seen union membership grow in recent years, places like South Carolina and Arizona are not exactly hotbeds of labor militancy.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of *Solidarity for Sale* is that it is very difficult for the reader to tell where decay actually exists because Fitch sees it everywhere. What is the real extent of union corruption? How many locals a year face charges? And isn't there something about portraying the entire movement as fraught with thieves that demeans the daily difficulties faced by people who strive to organize and represent workers? The past twenty years have seen extensive struggles against organized crime and corruption in unions like the Teamsters, SEIU and HERE, through the combined efforts of the federal government and internal movements for union democracy. Fitch implies that these have all failed miserably. But there are several recent books—like historian David Witwer's account of corruption and reform in the Teamsters union, the autobiography of Herman Benson, founder of the Association for Union Democracy, and NYU law professor James Jacobs's *Mobsters, Unions, and Feds*—that have tried to take stock. These authors see the fight against union corruption as an integral part of the story of American labor. Instead of arguing that American unions are structurally doomed, they give a sense of the ebb and flow of conflict within unions, and a sense of why anticorruption measures have sometimes been able to succeed. And while not being rosy about corruption, they help the reader to grasp

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the hope that the labor movement still embodies for millions of Americans, the reasons that despite all the many failures of the past 100 years, people still want to join unions and will sometimes risk a great deal to do so.

Oddly absent in Fitch's bleak account is the power of business in America. After all, employer violence, legal obstacles to organizing and the constant fear of reprisal from the boss have deterred untold numbers from union activism. And this, in turn, has helped create a climate in which corruption could flourish. But like so many veterans of the 1960s, Fitch seems in this book to have turned away from analyzing the powerful. Instead, his rage at the political direction of the United States is focused inward, at labor itself. The result is a book ostensibly written for union supporters that seems designed to alienate most potential readers in the world of labor. The hermetic treatment of the labor movement—as though it evolved in isolation from the struggle with business—the melodramatic language about monopoly unionism and the occasional lapses into *Godfather* stereotypes are the exact opposite of what a book on a topic as serious as union corruption needs. Even Luther, when he nailed his theses to the cathedral door, was thinking about how to win followers to his vision of the Gospel. ■

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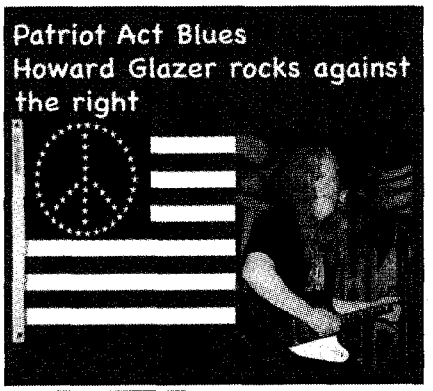

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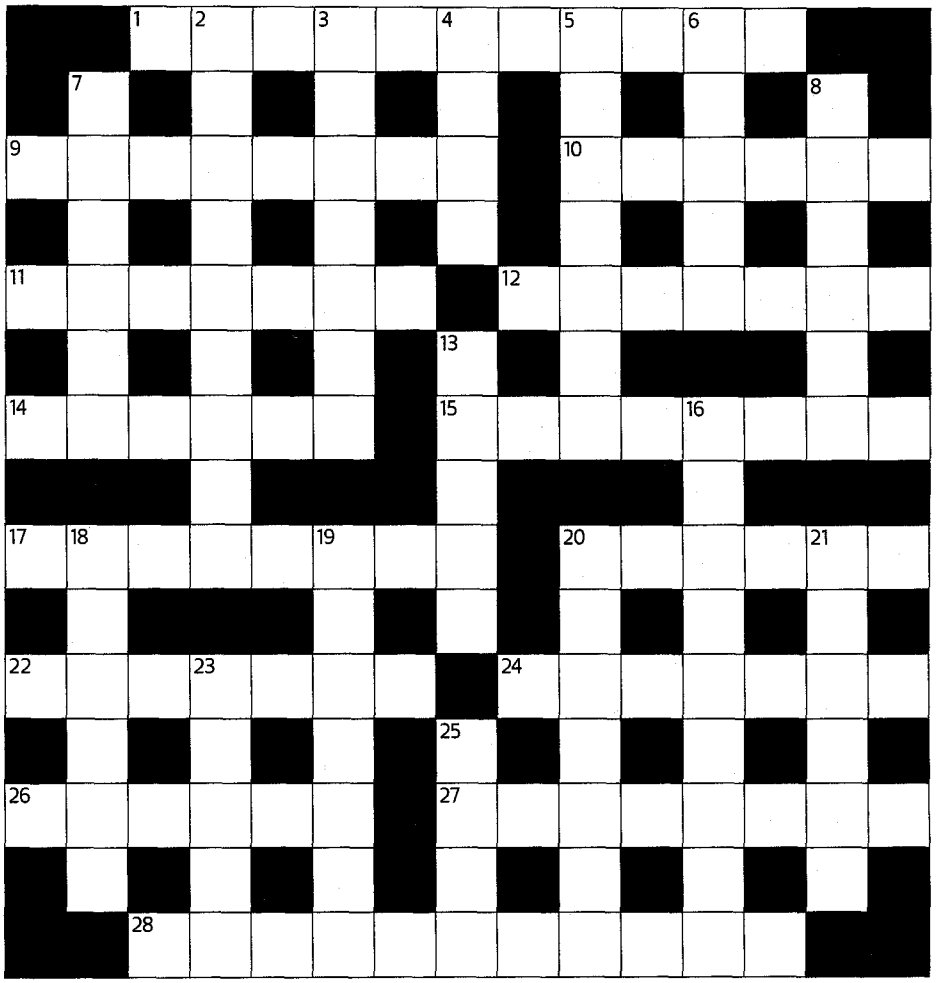

ACROSS

1 In favor of living with a fixed charge, but getting to run wild! (11)

9 This might be left when the nun, as they say, gets around in here. (9)

10 Blue when roses are red, but really a darker color for an instrument, and in Paris, too! (6)

11 Do at one time what is right in Berlin, where a treaty was signed. (7)

12 The pace of a supposedly clever type, especially when you're having a ball. (3-4)

14 Don't get down having this drawback—it's one way to get high! (6)

15 Some mothers looked for such types for their daughters, proving there is some point to a falsehood that could be glib at heart. (8)

17 and **20** Commands in the army that put you on your feet. (8,6)

22 You see the little devil wander, but still get better. (7)

24 Old prosperity, with your old way? That's rich! (7)

26 One who was on the floor when the band played on—or one that just floats on air? (6)

27 Not an old-fashioned attribute of cattle—but a tidy lot have it. (8)

28 Digs for coal with Willie of the old song—being an eliminator of deep trouble. (11)

DOWN

2 Adam and Eve had to make a fuss this way. (5,4)

3 Locked up, after getting to cheat badly in a couple of numbers. (7)

4, 25 and **13** A word of warning—understand what's on the shelf. (You have it ahead of time.) (13)

5 Music for the G string is bad, when you keep the instrument inside with what might be stuffed on your plate… (7)

6 …but there's something fishy about this Beethoven music. (5)

7 Mine comes up with the overturned vessel, but it's still first rate! (3-3)

8 Fix the rope up neatly again, or you'll have to pull back in terror! (6)

13 See 4

16 Sluggishness has the onetime candidate, Bob, surrounded by innocence in the extreme. (9)

18 Met up with a pleasant beginning, where Solomon wandered around. (6)

19 Where to find a nice rhyme scheme? Just the opposite! (7)

20 With too many years to have too much? (7)

21 Concerning that chopped up food, you can go over it again if you do. (6)

23 Spoke in the plural form. (5)

25 See 4

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

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I		A		U		O		V		C		R		Y
S	E	N	A	T	O	R		E	N	R	O	U	T	E
L		I		E		E		R		O		N		B
O	I	L	S		A	M	B	A	S	S	A	D	O	R
C		L		O		A		L		S		E		O
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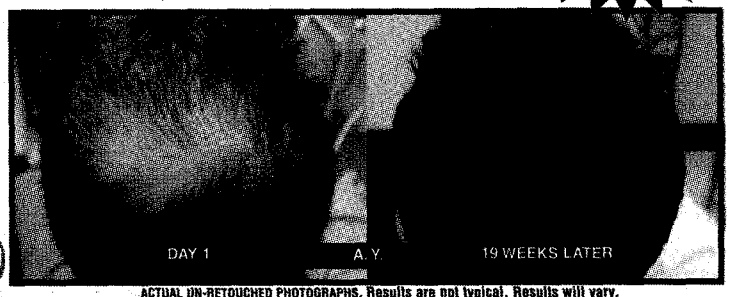

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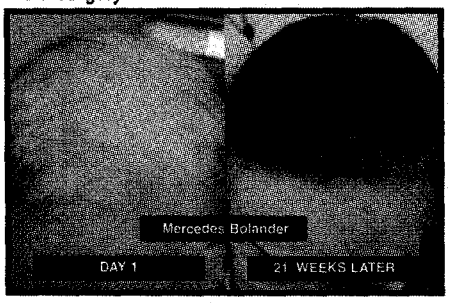

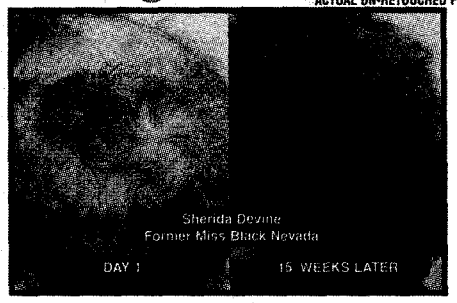

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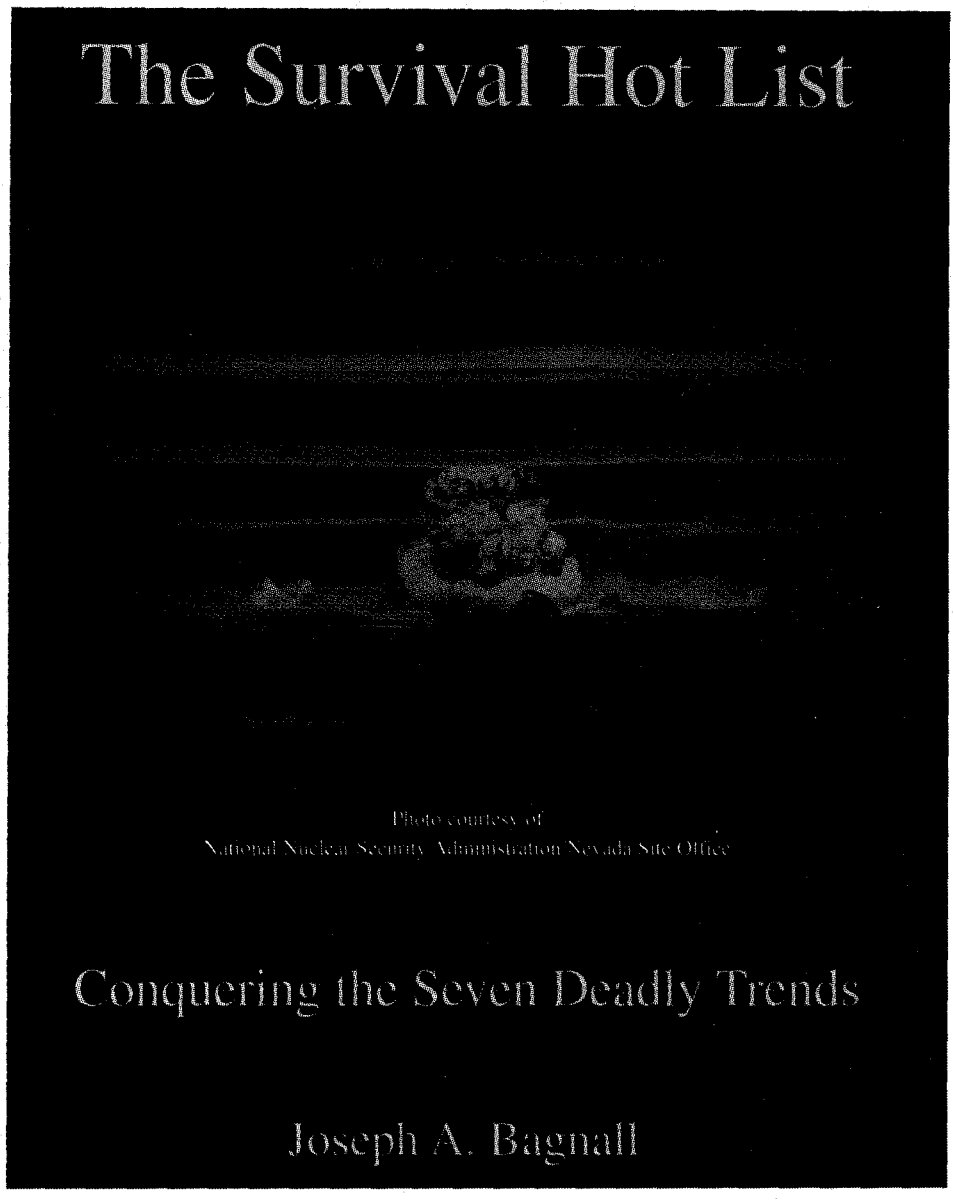
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Conquering the Seven Deadly Trends
Joseph A. Bagnall

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